

6/13/22 Monday

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Between Inflation and a Hard Place: Fed Risks Recession by Raising Interest Rates, Experts Say

Despite the US Federal Reserve's largest interest rate increase in 22 years, the US saw its largest inflation increase in 40 years in May. The situation has many fearing that the US economy may be doomed to enter a recession after two years of recovery from the crash at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Friday, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) [reported in its monthly bulletin](#) on consumer price indices that prices had increased by an average of 8.6% in May from where they were in May 2021, noting it was the largest year-on-year increase since December 1981. This, despite the US central bank [increasing interest rates](#) by between 0.5% and 0.75% at the start of the month - a move intended to slow the declining value of the dollar.

As a result, Wall Street is preparing for even bigger rate hikes from the Fed following the [next board meeting](#) on Wednesday.

"Fifty [base points] was the big round number six months ago. Meanwhile, 75 is a very middling type of hike. So the Fed might say: 'Look, if we want to show commitment, let's just do 100,'" Steven Englander, global head of G-10 FX research at Standard Chartered Bank, [told Bloomberg on Monday](#), referring to the base points system used to describe interest rate increases. One hundred base points translates to an increase by 1 percentage point.

On Monday, the [Effective Federal Funds Rate](#), or the interest rate set by the Fed that requires banks to hold on to a certain amount of their assets instead of lending them out overnight, was 0.83%. An increase of 100 base points would place it at 1.83%.

Rising inflation has been blamed on a number of factors, including pandemic-related shipping cost increases, spiking oil, gasoline and diesel prices, and price gouging by both commodity sellers and oil companies. The Biden administration [has variously tried](#) to blame Russia's special operation in Ukraine or [greedy oil companies](#) for the hike, but [polls show](#) that a majority of Americans ultimately blame his administration.

Englander told the New York paper the Fed could implement a dramatic rate increase as part of what he called a "Volcker moment," referring to former Fed Chairman Paul Volcker's harsh reaction to inflation in 1979.

Volcker dramatically increased interest rates over a short period of time, which put an end to the strangling "stagflation" of the 1970s but it also caused the London Inter-Bank Offer Rate (LIBOR) to skyrocket, [destroying the economies](#) of many Third World nations. The dramatically increasing national debt led to the 1980s being called [the "Lost Decade."](#)

However, increasing interest rates carries with it another risk: bringing the US economy to a grinding halt and triggering a recession.

"The chairman of the Fed doesn't want to let the 'r' word slip out of his mouth in a positive way, that we need a recession," former US central bank policy maker Alan Blinder [told Bloomberg on Sunday](#). "But there are a lot of euphemisms and he'll use them."

Banks like JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Barclays are preparing for a wage-price spiral, in which low unemployment rates create pressure for higher wages as companies try to win the few remaining workers, which translates into higher prices, which further drives inflation and requires even higher wages to offset the depreciating value of the dollar.

Unemployment is also nearing historic lows, approaching the 3.5% it was at immediately prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, when global lockdowns in March and April 2020 collapsed the world economy as hundreds of millions of workers stayed home and global trade ground to a halt in an attempt to stop the spread of the deadly virus.

The Fed is already predicting a rise in unemployment later this year even in the best of circumstances, which Fed Chairman Jerome Powell has referred to as [a "soft or 'soft-ish' landing."](#)

Stock markets were in chaos on Monday as bond yields jumped and stock prices fell, with the Dow Jones down nearly 700 points when this story went to publication. The S&P 500 and Nasdaq had suffered even worse than the Dow, with Jack Ablin, founding partner of Cresset Capital, [telling CNBC that](#) "anyone who wants to be bullish can't find anything to hang their hat on." The index had fallen nearly 20% from its March high.

A [poll conducted by the](#) Washington Post and George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government in late April and early May found that two-thirds of Americans expect inflation to get worse this year, with 9 in 10 Americans making some kind of spending cutbacks to compensate for the price increases.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Treasure Hunters Say 'Incontrovertible Photographic Evidence' Proves FBI Filmed Legendary Gold Find

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has been accused of hiding its 2018 discovery of a massive trove of lost gold dating to the Civil War from both treasure hunters to whom it might owe a finder's fee and the US state of Pennsylvania, which would likely claim the gold for itself as abandoned property.

According to legend, during the US Civil War, a huge amount of gold was hijacked by Confederate sympathizers in 1863 while on its way to the US Mint in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Mint records from the era haven't survived, so there's no verification any gold shipment ever went missing, but if it did exist, it would be [worth millions](#) of dollars today.

According to a group of treasure hunters, the FBI has lied about not having film footage of its hunt for the final resting place of the massive gold stash in Pennsylvania's mountainous Elk County. Now the group is suing the federal government to get the hidden videos.

Finders Keepers says in a new court filing that the FBI originally told them it had 17 relevant video files related to the dig at Dent's Run, but later reduced that number to just four videos,

which [turned out to be the same videos](#) originally supplied to the bureau by Finders Keepers when it tipped them off about the find, hoping to collect a finder's fee for the goods.

In other words, the FBI says it shot zero footage of the dig site, which it says turned up no evidence of gold. This, despite a [report by a commissioned geophysicist](#) who used a microgravity test to determine that an object of some 9 tons in mass and with a density consistent with gold was located underground at Dent's Run.

Included in the filing is a photo that Finders Keepers co-owner Dennis Parada says came from a hidden trail camera he posted in the forest at Dent's Run in March 2018 and which reportedly shows an FBI agent with a video camera at the site.

The photo "suggests either the FBI has falsely claimed to have no other responsive videotapes or the FBI illegally destroyed responsive videotapes in an effort to circumvent the FOIA's disclosure requirements," Anne Weismann, Parada's lawyer, [wrote in the filing](#).

The filing asks a federal judge to order the US Department of Justice to pay a portion of Finders Keepers' legal fees associated with the fight to get the videos, and to hold the FBI accountable for "covering up the results of its excavation ... that highly advanced scientific technology indicated contained multiple tons of gold."

"For the FBI to now say it has no videotapes of the dig strains credulity and takes this whole affair to the next level," Warren Getler, who has worked closely with Finders Keepers, told the Associated Press. "We have incontrovertible photographic evidence of them videotaping the dig and interviewing their operational leader at the site. It raises a lot of serious questions."

The FBI has good reason to want to hide the find if indeed it found gold at Dent's Run. Not only could it potentially owe Finders Keepers a finder's fee, but the gold could [actually belong to the Pennsylvania](#) state government. Indeed, one FBI agent in Philadelphia who was in pursuit of the gold wrote just that in an affidavit obtained by the Associated Press last year.

"I am concerned that, even if DCNR [Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources] gave initial consent for the FBI to excavate the cache of gold secreted at the Dent's Run Site, that consent could be revoked before the FBI recovered the United States property, with the result of DCNR unlawfully claiming that that cache of gold is abandoned property and, thus, belongs to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania," Jacob Archer, a member of the FBI art crime team in Philadelphia, wrote in the 2018 filing.

Instead, after it commissioned the geophysicist's report, the FBI used it to obtain a warrant to seize any gold at the site

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

China's Economy Got \$26 Billion Boost From Gov Buying 11 Billion Covid-19 Tests - Report

In contrast to Western governments' health policies, China has adopted a "dynamic Zero Covid" policy intended to keep the infectious respiratory virus from spreading unimpeded through the Chinese population, which experts say would kill millions.

Amid China's rigorous effort to identify, isolate and treat all COVID-19 cases in the country, the Chinese government has spent \$26 billion on testing materials in just the last three months,

according to a Sunday report by researchers with Soochow Securities, a Suzhou-based investment firm.

The report, viewed by the [South China Morning Post](#) (SCMP), said that in April, May and June, China bought 10.8 billion COVID-19 tests at a cost of 174.6 billion yuan (\$26 billion). That cash injection will likely boost the Chinese economy modestly in the second quarter, by about 0.62%, helping to offset the damage done by the lockdowns that accompanied mass-testing, which often enveloped cities of tens of millions of people for weeks at a time.

In late April, the Politburo of the Communist Party of China [said it expected to still meet](#) a revised economic growth target of 5.5% for 2022, after a more than 6% increase was expected in late 2021 for China's gross domestic product for this year. That was before the Omicron variant burst onto the scene, causing the largest COVID-19 outbreak to date in the United States and pushing China's lockdown system to the brink.

Beijing has tried other methods to buttress the economy as well, including [backing off some planned](#) tech regulations intended as part of a crackdown on corruption and monopolistic practices in the tech sector. In other instances, more drastic measures have been used, such as [locking employees in](#) at key factories in Shanghai so that production can continue without the risk of a Covid exposure causing a closure.

Since December, China has struggled through [one lockdown after another](#), testing cities of tens of millions of people at a time. Still, even including the initial COVID-19 outbreak in late 2019 and early 2020, mainland China has only seen about 886,000 cases of the virus, nearly all of them in the last six months, and 5,226 deaths, most of which took place in early 2020. Hong Kong, however, has struggled to [cope with a vast outbreak](#) that might have infected as much as half the special autonomous region's population, or 3.6 million people.

By comparison, in a country with one-quarter the population of China, the United States, there have been [more than 85 million COVID-19 cases](#) and more than 1 million deaths, although [some indirect data](#) from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests the true number of Covid cases could have been twice that. Almost immediately after COVID-19 hit the US in March 2020, the federal government began declaring it impossible to contain the virus and [commentators spoke openly](#) of the disease inevitably becoming endemic.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Google to Pay \$118 Million to Settle Case Alleging Female Employees Are Underpaid

According to one 2021 survey, on average, women in tech were offered salaries just 2.5% less than men in those same roles. However, critics note that the pay gap is just one aspect of gender inequality, arguing that career advancement opportunities play an even bigger role in creating inequity.

Tech giant Google will pay \$118 million to settle a class-action lawsuit alleging it has an unfair pay gap between male and female workers, caused not just by unfair pay scales but also by placing and keeping women in jobs with lower compensation ceilings and advancement opportunities than their male counterparts.

The [suit alleged](#) Google had violated the California Equal Pay Act and other state laws by “systematically paying” women less than men. Lieff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein LLP and Altshuler Berzon LLP, the lawyers who represented some 15,500 women in 236 job titles in the suit, announced the victory in a [Saturday news release](#).

“As a woman who’s spent her entire career in the tech industry, I’m optimistic that the actions Google has agreed to take as part of this settlement will ensure more equity for women,” Plaintiff Holly Pease said in the release. “Google, since its founding, has led the tech industry. They also have an opportunity to lead the charge to ensure inclusion and equity for women in tech.”

[Part of the settlement](#) is that Google will agree to an independent third-party expert analyzing its leveling-at-hire practices, and that an independent labor economist will look at its internal studies on pay equity. The agreement still has to be approved by a San Francisco Superior Court judge.

Bizarrely, in 2019, Google concluded in one of those internal studies that men were being paid less money, not more, to do the same work as women. In a [March 2019 blog post](#), Lauren Barbato, the company’s lead analyst for pay equity, and people analytics revealed Google had paid out \$9.7 million to 10,677 employees the year prior to address the “discrepancies” in pay. Joelle Emerson, chief executive of consulting firm Paradigm, told the [New York Times](#) at the time that Google was advancing a “flawed and incomplete sense of equality” by looking at salaries rather than the “equity” that would come from fairer career-long experiences.

While women at Google have chalked up a victory, women engaged in a similar class-action suit against Google rival Oracle have suffered a serious setback. On Friday, San Mateo County Superior Court Judge V. Raymond Swope [ruled that it would not be manageable](#) for a suit brought by more than 3,000 Oracle employees in 125 different job classifications to go to trial. The women are also suing under the state’s Equal Pay Act.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Stocks Enter Bear Market as Dow Plummets 876 Points Amid Inflation, Rate Hike Fears
By - Evan Craighead

Recent data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed that May’s Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 8.6% from a year ago, amounting to the fastest increase since 1981. The unexpected surge was also observed in core CPI (excluding energy and food), which rose some 6%.

US stocks fell into bear market territory on Monday as investors anticipated the prospect of the US central bank raising interest rates once again in an attempt to tamp down inflation.

The S&P 500 fell 3.9% on June 13, plummeting the index to its lowest level since March 2021, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average sank 876 points (2.8%) and the Nasdaq Composite observed a 4.7% tumble. The Nasdaq has dropped more than 10% in the past two trading sessions alone.

All major sectors of the S&P went into the red on Monday, with tech, consumer discretionary and energy down more than 4%. Signature Bank(SBNY) had one of the worst showings, dropping nearly 13%.

Tesla continued to log losses, tumbling about 6.8%. Amazon slumped some 4.9%. Stocks began a dramatic shift after the [Wall Street Journal published a report](#) suggesting the US Federal Reserve may decide to raise interest rates by 0.75 percentage points rather than the expected half-percent increase.

The US central bank has not raised interest rates by 0.75 percentage points--triple the usual amount--since November 1994.

After raising interest rates by double the usual increment last month, Fed Chair Jerome Powell asserted that the bank would continue a similar course of action until economic data provides "clear and convincing evidence that inflation pressures are abating and inflation is coming down."

"And if we don't see that, then then we'll have to consider moving more aggressively," Powell told a WSJ conference last month. "If we do see that, then we can consider moving to a slower pace."

News traveled quickly among traders and, as of Monday, the Fed Funds futures tool reports a 28% probability that the central bank's target interest band will increase by 0.75 percentage points and a 72% probability that it will increase by the anticipated increase of 0.5percentage points, [according to CME Group data](#). Economists' predictions of a three-quarter rose by 25% since last week.

As consumers continue to be hit with exorbitant gas prices, mortgages and other loans are also falling victim to the fragile US economy, with the 10-year Treasury yield jumping from 3.15% to 3.37%, the highest level since 2011, [according to the Associated Press](#).

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Expands Probe Into Trump Media Merger as Netizens Accuse 'Truth Social' of Censorship
By - Evan Craighead

A planned merger between Digital World Acquisition Corp. and Trump Media & Technology Group has been under SEC investigation since late 2021. As financial regulators examine communications between the two firms, the special purpose acquisition company floundered in the US markets, with shares down more than 13% since the start of the year.

Blank check company Digital World Acquisition Corp (DWAC) revealed on Monday that regulators are seeking additional information in the SEC probe on the special purpose acquisition company (SPAC) buying Trump Media & Technology Group (TMTG), the company behind former US President Donald Trump's social media platform 'Truth Social.'

Financial regulators are requesting the SPAC turn over additional information on "communications regarding and due diligence of potential targets other than TMTG, relationships between and among Digital World ... and other entities," as well as payments made to certain advisers and "certain elements of the transaction history for equity."

The expanded scope appears to be a hard look into the relationship DWAC may have had with the former US president and his media company prior to the decision for the merger, which must be between two separate entities and could not be coordinated before the SPAC goes public. The extent of Trump's communications and relationship with DWAC were brought into question not long after the [New York Times reported in October that Patrick Orlando](#), chief executive officer of DWAC, met with Trump representatives and discussed his media plan as early as April.

A TMTG spokesperson denied the claim and said Orlando had discussions regarding a separate partnership between Trump and another SPAC that he presides over.

[Investigators previously sought a range of information from DWAC](#), including information on company leadership, investors, and other communications. At the time, DWAC claimed accounting delays were behind its delayed issuances to regulators.

The SEC is specifically seeking financial information included in the company's "registration statement." The subsequent examination "could materially delay, materially impede, or prevent the consummation of the Business Combination," the filing states.

[As DWAC struggles to maintain in Nasdaq](#), Truth Social's moderation, or "censorship" has remained a point of contention since the fledgling social media platform launched several months ago. In recent days, several users of the app claimed their accounts were permanently suspended after posting about the House's public hearings on the January 6 insurrection. "My Truth Social account was just permanently suspended for talking about the January 6th Committee hearings," Travis Allen tweeted with a screenshot attached.

Other netizens claimed they were suspended after [posting clips from the prime-time hearing](#). One man even said he was given the boot after stating that then Democratic challenger Joe Biden won the 2020 presidential election.

Per the terms of service, Truth Social reserves the right to "in our sole discretion and without notice or liability, deny access to and use of the service (including blocking certain IP addresses) to any person for any reason or for no reason."

[While Trump seemed skeptical of the app and the lack of new users signing up](#), the former US president has been active on the platform since last month. In a recent post, 45 took aim at former presidential adviser Ivanka Trump, his eldest daughter, over her decision to testify. Trump currently has more than 3.25 million followers on the app.

International

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Air Force: Airmen Not at Fault for Deaths of Afghans Who Fell Off C-17 During Kabul Evacuation

By - Evan Craighead

US military officials evacuating civilians from *Taliban-seized Kabul on August 16, 2021, were seen taking off from Hamid Karzai International Airport as a number of Afghans on the tarmac

pleaded for a seat and even hopped on the exterior of the C-17 Globemaster III. Hours later, human remains were discovered in a wheel well of the cargo plane.

US airmen tasked with the rushed evacuation from Afghanistan last August were acting "in compliance with applicable rules of engagement" and are not responsible for the tragic deaths associated with the operation, the US Air Force concluded in a Monday release, citing two monthslong probes on the matter.

US Air Force spokesperson Ann Stefanek said the twin investigations into the tarmac deaths found that crew members "exercised sound judgment in their decision to get airborne as quickly as possible when faced with an unprecedented and rapidly deteriorating security situation."

Qatar authorities declined to investigate further after the incident was reviewed by the Air Force's Office of Special Investigations.

US Central Command, responsible for American military operations in the Middle East, and the service's Air Mobility Command conducted their own inquiries and "rendered concurring opinions that the aircrew was in compliance with applicable rules of engagement specific to the event and the overall law of armed conflict," Stefanek said.

The US airmen aboard the C-17 on August 16 have returned to duty after "seeking appropriate care and services to help cope with any trauma from this unprecedented experience," noted the USAF spokesperson.

Despite multiple probes into the deaths, it remains unclear how many individuals died in association with the evacuation of some 125,000 individuals.

Afghan media identified two of the fatal fall victims as 24-year-old dentist Fida Mohammad and Safiullah Hotak, a young man. The proximity of their bodies led many to believe they clung to each other in their last moments.

Zaki Anwari, a 17-year-old on Afghanistan's national football team, was crushed under the wheel of a C-17 after getting knocked off balance on the tarmac.

The Air Force announced its review into the deaths not long after the C-17 crew discovered human body parts within the wheel well after landing at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. According to the service, the aircraft was impounded and inspected amid the probes and has since been processed and documented.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Says Has Plan to Build Temporary Silos on Ukraine Borders to Export Grain

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that he has a plan to build temporary silos on Ukraine's borders to export grain.

"So we [have] a plan to get it out to other countries, to the rest of the world. So we are gonna build temporary silos on the borders of Ukraine including in Poland so that we could transfer it and get it out across the world," he said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Finland, Sweden Might Attend Madrid NATO Summit as 'Invitees' - US Ambassador

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - Finland and Sweden may join the upcoming NATO summit in Madrid as non-member invitees despite Turkey's stance to deny them entry in the alliance, US Ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith said on Tuesday.

"Our goal here is to try and see if we might have Sweden and Finland sitting at the table in Madrid as invitees," Smith said. "Many of us had hopes that we would see these two countries join us in Madrid as invitees at the table with the other leaders. We don't know if that will come to pass."

The United States is working behind closed doors to address the concerns Turkey has raised about Finland and Sweden's possible accession to the alliance, Smith said.

The Madrid summit is scheduled to take place from June 28-30 and will include discussions on areas including NATO force posture and support for Ukraine, Smith added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Denmark Foreign Minister Visiting Canada This Week to Discuss Arctic, Collaboration - Joly

OTTAWA, June 14 (Sputnik) - A Danish delegation headed by Foreign Affairs Minister Jeppe Kofod will visit Canada from June 14-15 to discuss collaboration on central issues of mutual interest, including the Arctic, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly said on Tuesday. "I am pleased to welcome my friends from the Kingdom of Denmark to Canada. Our countries share a rich history of strategic collaboration. We are polar nations, and the Arctic is a pillar of our identities. I look forward to continued collaboration to address key issues of mutual interest," Joly said in a statement.

The bilateral meetings will mainly focus on issues pertaining to the Arctic and on an outstanding border dispute between the two countries, the statement said.

An agreement between the two countries finalizing the efforts to boost collaboration is expected to be signed soon, the statement said.

Talks will also include food and energy security, and Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, the statement added.

Canada shares a maritime boundary with Denmark, but a border dispute over Hans Island, an uninhabited territory between Canada's Ellesmere Island and Greenland, has been ongoing for decades.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US, Allies to Review This Week What Additional Security Aid to Provide Ukraine - Envoy

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The United States and its allies will review during the Defense Contact Group meeting in Brussels this week what additional security assistance to provide Ukraine, US Ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith said on Tuesday.

"On Wednesday, the US is hosting the Ukrainian Defense Contact Group ... They will be reviewing what additional security assistance they can provide in the immediate medium and long term to help Ukraine win this war," Smith said during a conference call with reporters. Smith added that starting late Wednesday after the Contact Group meeting and into Thursday, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will be joining NATO defense ministers to discuss a new baseline for their deterrence and defense posture. Announcements about the military alliance's force posture are expected during the NATO summit in Madrid on June 29-30, Smith added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Northrop Grumman Tests Secure Laser Network for Low Earth Orbit Satellites - Release

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - Northrop Grumman has successfully tested a new secure laser communications system to network between constellations of low earth orbit (LEO) satellites serving the US armed forces, the company announced in a press release on Tuesday. "Northrop Grumman Corporation today announced the successful ground demonstration of a secure networked laser communications system for proliferated LEO constellations supporting the US military," the release said.

Northrop Grumman said its T1TL mesh satellite constellation would provide resilient, low-latency, high-volume data transport supporting US military missions around the world and serve as a critical element for Joint All Domain Command Control.

Performed for the Space Development Agency (SDA) leadership, the demonstration validated compatibility between commercially developed laser communication and secure US government encryption hardware, the release said.

The test also provided a baseline for Northrop Grumman's future proliferated space crosslink communications offerings including SDA's transport and tracking programs, the release added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Office of Canada's Joly Knew Official Was to Attend Reception at Russian Embassy – Reports

OTTAWA, June 14 (Sputnik) – The office of Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly knew that a senior official was to attend a reception at the Russian embassy marking Russia Day and only apologized under pressure from the prime minister's office, The Globe and Mail reported on Tuesday.

Last Friday, deputy protocol chief in Canada's global affairs department, Yasemin Heinbecker, attended an event hosted by Ambassador Oleg Stepanov to celebrate Russia Day.

The Canadian foreign ministry has offered mixed explanation for the attendance, angering the Ukrainian community. While it initially justified it, it later backpedaled, offering apologies before the foreign minister finally declared it "unacceptable."

However, the Canadian newspaper says, Joly's office knew beforehand that Heinbecker was to attend the party at the Russian embassy although a spokesperson for the minister denied that Joly herself knew about it.

According to Globe, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who was in Los Angeles for the Summit of the Americas, was "caught off-guard" by Global Affairs' decision to send an official to the reception. His office reportedly told Joly to apologize and ban her ministry's officials from attending another Russia events as long as the military operation in Ukraine continues.

On Monday, Russian Ambassador to Canada Oleg Stepanov said that Global Affairs' reaction to an official attending the Russia Day event is "unprofessional" and was a cause for regret, stressing that diplomacy is especially needed in times of crises.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Issues License for Energy Transactions With Certain Russian Entities Until December 5

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has issued a license authorizing energy transactions with certain Russian entities through December 5, the Treasury Department said on Tuesday.

"Except as provided in paragraph (c) of this general license, all transactions prohibited by Executive Order (E.O.) 14024 involving one or more of the following entities that are related to energy are authorized, through 12:01 a.m. eastern standard time, December 5, 2022," the Treasury Department said in a statement.

This license does not authorize transactions prohibited by certain US regulations, as well as any debts to an account on the books of a US financial institution of Russia's Central Bank, the statement said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

American People Well Positioned on Issue of Inflation - White House

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The people in the United States are prepared to deal with inflation, White House spokesperson Karine Jeanne-Pierre said on Tuesday.

"The American people are well positioned [with respect to inflation] but we are watching on this very closely," Jeanne-Pierre said, adding that the Biden administration is closely watching developments regarding inflation.

The Federal Reserve's tolerance for inflation is 2% per year and it has vowed to continually raise interest rates this year, even slow the economy down if necessary, to bring price growth back to its target.

After leaving rates at between zero and 0.25% for a period of two years due to the coronavirus outbreak measures, the Federal Reserve raised them in March by 25 basis points, or a quarter-percentage point, and in May by 50 basis points, or a half-percentage point.

The Federal Reserve's upcoming meeting on Wednesday was initially expected to result in another half-point rise, but with the hotter-than-expected Consumer Price Index reading for May, some economists are speculating that the US central bank might be toying with a 75 basis point, or three-quarter percentage point, hike instead.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

White House Says Discussing Some 'Irresponsible' Trump Tariffs

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) – The Biden administration is discussing some of the "irresponsible" tariffs imposed by former President Donald Trump, White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters on Tuesday.

"We have said from the beginning, some Trump's tariffs were irresponsible and do not advance economic or national security. We are discussing this and working to align these tariffs," Jean-Pierre said when asked to confirm media reports that the White House is leaning toward removing some of the tariffs on Chinese goods.

The White House's priority is to secure interests of American workers, she added.

Jean-Pierre declined to reveal the details of the ongoing conversations. "I do not have anything to share. This is something that we are discussing internally," she stated.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Considers Lifting Some of Trump's Tariffs on China – Reports

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) – US President Joe Biden is weighing lifting some of the tariffs that his predecessor, Donald Trump, slapped on China, Axios reported on Tuesday, citing sources in the know.

Biden reportedly discussed the matter with some key members of his cabinet last week. No final decision has been made yet, but an official announcement is expected by the end of June, the report said.

The White House is expected to direct the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) to start a formal "exclusions process" to determine if some items like bicycles should be exempted from the tariffs. At the same time, Biden is less likely to include steel, aluminum or other big industrial goods in this list, according to the report.

The lifting of Trump's China tariffs may have a very mild impact on the Consumer Price Index. That is why some administration members, including USTR Katherine Tai, would like to keep maintaining leverage on Beijing, the report added.

White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said on Wednesday that Biden is actively considering a variety of options to ease US trade tariffs imposed on China in order to help alleviate inflation in the United States.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden to Visit Mideast From July 13-16 With Stops in Israel, W. Bank, S. Arabia - Official
(Adds more trip details in paras 3-8)

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden will head to the Middle East region, including Israel, the West Bank and Saudi Arabia, where Iran will be big part of discussions, a senior US administration official told reporters.

"The president will visit the Middle East region from July 13 to July 16 with stops in Israel, the West Bank and Saudi Arabia and engagements with nearly a dozen counterparts from across the region and beyond," the official said, adding that Iran will be the big backdrop during the trip. Biden will first stop in Israel, his first visit to the county as US president, to meet with Israeli leaders to discuss security cooperation in the region and trade, including Israel deepening ties in the region through the Abraham Accords, the official said.

Biden will also hold a virtual summit in Israel with his Israeli, Indian, and Emirati counterparts to discuss food insecurity and other matters of mutual interest, the official said.

During Biden's visit to the West Bank, Biden will discuss with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas his commitment to a two-state solution and opportunities to rekindle a new political horizon that can ensure security and prosperity for both Israelis and Palestinians, the official said.

In Saudi Arabia, the official said, Biden will participate in the summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council plus three with his counterparts from Saudi Arabia Kuwait, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar, plus Iraq, Jordan and Egypt.

They will discuss the UN-brokered truce in Yemen, expanding regional economic and security cooperation in the region, deterring threats from Iran, advancing human rights and ensuring global energy and food security, the official added.

The official said Biden will have a series of bilateral engagements with his counterparts during the trip and deliverables are expected from the meetings, but those details will be previewed at a later time.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Expected to Meet With Saudi Crown Prince During Trip to Kingdom in Mid-July

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden is expected to meet with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during his visit to Saudi Arabia in mid-July, a senior US administration official told reporters.

"So yes, we can expect the President to see the Crown Prince," the official said.

When asked if the US would allow the crown prince to get off the hook for killing journalist Jamal Khashoggi, the official said that Biden has made it clear he will not change his views on human rights.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Sees Visit to S. Arabia as Important for Advancing Bilateral Relations - US Official

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden believes his visit to Saudi Arabia is important to advancing bilateral relations and cooperating on a shared interest to bring stability to the Middle East, a senior US administration official told reporters.

"The president believes strongly that at this particular moment of the world with interest at stake for the United States and the American people, visiting Saudi Arabia for a summit of leaders from across the Middle East region, and to discuss face to face with those leaders, including the Saudis, how we move forward as partners is a smart thing to do at the right time and offers opportunity for significant gains both for the United States, for Saudi Arabia, for the Middle East region, and for advancing our strategy towards a more stable, more peaceful, and more integrated region, which ultimately benefits the American people and the world," the official said. The officials said this visit is the culmination of months of diplomacy, bilateral, and multilateral efforts, and sets the stage for what the Biden administration hopes to get done through the rest of this year and through 2023 as well.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden to Visit Mideast From July 13-16 With Stops in Israel, W. Bank, S. Arabia - Official

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - President Joe Biden will head to the Middle East region, including Israel, the West Bank and Saudi Arabia, where Iran will be big part of discussions, a senior US administration official told reporters.

"The president will visit the Middle East region from July 13 to July 16 with stops in Israel, the West Bank and Saudi Arabia and engagements with nearly a dozen counterparts from across the region and beyond," the official said, adding that Iran will be the big backdrop during the trip.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

NATO's Baltops 22 Drills Adapt to New Regional Realities - US Military

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The ongoing NATO-led Baltops military exercises in the Baltic Sea are adapting to today's situation in the region, US Brig. Gen. Marcus Annibale said Tuesday.

"The exercises adapt to the current events and to ensure stability," Annibale told reporters.

When asked whether the US command has noticed any unusual Russian activity in the area of the drills, Rear Adm. John Menoni replied: "So far all interactions are as expected."

Baltops 22 is taking place in the Baltic Sea from June 5-17. It brings together 16 NATO member states, as well as Sweden and Finland, which have recently submitted their membership bids.

Over 45 ships, more than 75 aircraft and 7,500 personnel are involved.

The exercise focuses on anti-submarine warfare, anti-aircraft defense, and includes a mock amphibious assault operation off the coast of Lithuania.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

RPT - US Sanctions on Russian Diamonds Mainly Impacting Supply to India - Antwerp Diamond Center

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The US sanctions imposed on Russian rough diamonds are mostly having a serious impact on India's supply chain, Antwerp World Diamond Centre head of media relations Tom Neys told Sputnik.

In early April, the Biden administration imposed sanctions on Russian diamond mining company Alrosa, which is responsible for 90% of Russia's diamond mining capacity and is the source of about a third of all diamonds worldwide. Prior to the designation on Alrosa, President Joe Biden issued an executive order to ban US imports of non-industrial diamonds from Russia.

"The problem is mainly in India today," Neys said. "The supply chain to India is seriously disrupted and the payment issues are still not fully resolved. Also, handling to Dubai goes problematic."

The disruption to India's supply chain has a huge impact on employment in the country, working weeks in the polish factories are getting shortened because of the supply shortage, Neys said.

In late May, the president of India's Diamond Workers Union Gujarat, Ramesh Zilariya, told Sputnik that Western sanctions on rough diamonds have ended up devastating workers in India's polishing industry, where unemployment, wage reductions, and suicide rates are now on the rise.

The Antwerp World Diamond Centre, which is the world's largest hub for rough and polished diamonds, still sees diamonds coming from Russia, but with big delays due to double and triple checking if all stages in transport and handling are fully compliant with the current sanctions, Neys said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

RPT - US Public's Support for Russia Sanctions, Global Role Down as Midterms Near - Think-Tank

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The US public's support for anti-Russia sanctions has significantly fallen as Americans feel an urgency for the Biden administration to focus on addressing rising inflation and fuel prices at home, in a trend indicating preference for a more modest role on the world stage ahead of the November midterms, Director of the Democracy Institute think-tank Patrick Basham told Sputnik.

A Pew Research Center poll released on Friday showed that a majority of Americans believe the Biden administration should focus on solving problems at home rather than overseas despite some, mostly elderly, holding a contrary view.

"Today, Americans remain supportive of Ukraine in the conflict and critical of Russia, but their support for specific anti-Russian measures has fallen significantly," Basham said. "Americans are now divided on continuing economic sanctions. They are opposed to the recent \$40 billion aid package. Revealing, our polling shows they are willing to accept a Ukrainian defeat, and most would not support any American effort to remove Russian President Vladimir Putin from office."

As most US voters' economic situations become more precarious, they are concluding that the Biden administration's foreign policy has helped to turn America's cost-of-living and supply chain problems into genuine crises, Basham said.

Americans are paying an average all-time high record of five dollars for a gallon of regular gasoline as of Saturday, and the trend will likely continue to climb as it has over the past weeks. Moreover, the US Consumer Price Index grew by 8.6% during the year to May, expanding by its fastest rate since 1981, as the cost of virtually everything - from food to fuel, shelter and clothing - rose again last month, according to the US Labor Department.

Joe Biden's approval rating meanwhile hit a new low of 39% last week, compared to Donald Trump's 45% at a similar point in his presidency, a Morning Consult/Politico poll showed.

Americans are also becoming impatient with the US government's ability to influence events on the ground in Ukraine, Basham said, adding that once it became obvious that the Biden administration's overall goal was Putin's exit from the Kremlin, rather than simply the defense of Ukraine, they began to recognize the potential length and breadth – and economic cost – of the US intervention.

Biden during a speech in Poland in March said Putin cannot remain in power, which the White House immediately walked back, emphasizing it did not seek regime change in Russia.

The Biden administration has blamed President Putin and his special military operation in Ukraine for the inflation and rising fuel prices in the United States, but he has avoided explaining that sanctions from the United States and its European allies are having substantial consequences on the global economy as well.

US FOREIGN POLICY TO IMPACT 2022 MIDTERMS, 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

US voters will likely support candidates in the 2022 midterms and 2024 US presidential candidate who will advocate for a more modest global role for America considering the United States' involvement in Ukraine is becoming less popular and with chaotic US exit from Afghanistan, Basham said.

"The most successful candidates in 2022, and probably in 2024, too, will be those that credibly present themselves as patriotic nationalists who will do what they believe to be best for America regardless of whether their actions are supported by their parties' foreign policy establishments, foreign governments, or globalist institutions," Basham said.

The US public is seeing that expansionist and interventionist foreign policy outweighs the benefits as skepticism grows about America's ability to shape global events for the better, Basham said.

IMPACT OF ANTI-RUSSIA SANCTIONS FROM THE WEST

The European Union plans to ban most energy imports from Russia by the end of 2022, but the United States supports a plan to allow Russian energy exports to flow but under a price cap to reduce the revenue Moscow makes from its energy products.

Western sanctions have already complicated trade around the world, especially on vital Russian exports of fertilizer and other agricultural products. Although the United States has some waivers in place to allow such exports, banks are so worried about possibly violating sanctions that some transactions are being terminated, according to Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia.

"Anti-Russian Western sanctions will have a negative, very tangible impact upon the global economic recovery," Basham said. "It has been obvious for some time that the sanctions either already have or soon will cause energy and food costs to increase considerably across Western nations. The subsequent anti-inflation campaigns from various central banks will ensure that economic growth across is tepid at best and may actually stall completely. "

Basham pointed out that the large number of nations in the Global South will suffer comparatively less than the Western nations because their energy and commercial relationships with Russia and China will be largely unaffected and, in many cases, will actually deepen to the respective countries' mutual benefit.

However, less economic growth and less wealth among Western nations will reduce their demand for imports from non-Western nations, which will drag growth in many export-led non-Western economies, Basham said.

AMERICAN FOREIGN FIGHTERS IN UKRAINE, CONCERNS OVER THOSE JOINING NEO-NAZIS

Last month, Politico reported, citing a US intelligence document it obtained, that US Customs and Border Protection is questioning American volunteers suspected of going to Ukraine to fight against Russia over concerns that some Americans may join extremist groups like the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, and return to the United States to become a domestic threat.

US Customs and Border Protection and the US Department of Justice did not respond to requests from Sputnik for comment on this matter.

"I think it is unlikely that those Americans who choose to join the Azov Battalion [AB] because of the AB's well-documented neo-Nazi sympathies will be a greater threat upon their return to America," Basham said. "Due to their abhorrent beliefs, such misguided individuals would be a

potential domestic threat whether they did or did not spend time amidst kindred spirits in Ukraine."

The possibility of Americans fighting for the Azov Battalion highlights one of the many double standards of the Biden administration's embrace of the Ukrainian government, Basham said. "As President Biden, Vice President [Kamala] Harris, and other senior administration figures spend considerable amounts of time characterizing their domestic political opponents as fascists, racists, and White supremacists, there is considerable irony, in the survival of the US-bankrolled Ukrainian government depending almost entirely upon the battlefield abilities of the Azov Battalion, a military outfit espousing beliefs diametrically opposite to those espoused by Biden and Harris," Basham said.

However, Basham does not believe American volunteers fighting on the Ukrainian side against Russia will itself escalate tensions between the United States and Russia.

"Any chance that such participation could have such an influence is watered-down by the return home already of many of these now quite demoralized volunteers, who have returned with tales of Russian superiority, and subsequently heavy Ukrainian losses, on the battlefield," Basham said.

Any serious risk of escalation between the United States and Russia would only occur should certain US officials who seek regime change in Russia dominate the decision-making inside the Biden administration, Basham said.

The Ukrainian Embassy in Washington told The Associated Press in early March that of approximately 6,000 Americans who signed up to fight in Ukraine, about half were rejected before even interviewing with Ukrainian officials. Moreover, the Ukrainian Embassy said that of the 3,000 Americans who went through the recruitment process, as of early March, only about 100 had actually been accepted.

Rutgers University law professor Roger Clark, who previously worked for New Zealand's Justice Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the UN Committee on Crime Prevention and Control, told Sputnik it is not illegal for American volunteers to fight in Ukraine.

"[T]he Neutrality Act is not a problem," Clark said. "It is clear on its face, and this is supported by case-law, that ANYBODY enlisting within the US commits a crime. But it is safe, under this Act, for US citizens and residents to enlist outside the US. So long, that is, the force they join is not at war with the US."

Clark said Biden is pretty determined not to place US troops on the ground in Ukraine, so federal efforts to vet potential US volunteers going to Ukraine could be a way to show it takes the Neutrality Act seriously, and to possibly fish for any potential breaches of the law.

The US government would probably only take action against Americans fighting in Ukraine if they were to commit war crimes, Clark said.

Texas A&M University International Affairs Professor Ronald Sievert, who had a career on international and national security matters at the US Justice Department, told Sputnik the Neutrality Act was designed to stop Americans from taking sides in the fight between France and the United Kingdom in 1795.

"Some people just want to fight Russia and sympathize with Ukraine," Sievert said. "Regardless, [US President George] Washington's proclamation of neutrality was not a law - President's do not make laws."

Sievert pointed out that American volunteers known as the Lincoln Battalion fought for communists against fascist Spain during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s.

NEGOTIATED PEACE SETTLEMENT IN UKRAINE NEEDED AT EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY

The State Department has repeatedly ruled out engaging with Moscow anytime soon with respect to the Ukraine conflict. US Congress recently passed a \$40 billion relief package for Ukraine, over half of which consists of military aid, raising concerns about the conflict escalating. "A negotiated peace settlement at the earliest opportunity is required to resolve this conflict," Basham said. "With each passing day, more Ukrainians are killed and injured and more territory is ceded to Russia. So, the longer the West waits to iron out a deal with Russia, the greater the toll upon Ukraine and the stronger the Russian bargaining position will be."

If the trajectory of the Ukraine conflict continues apace, before too long there will be no incentive for Russia to negotiate at all, because Moscow will soon have the upper hand, Basham said.

Basham said Volodymyr Zelenskyy is certainly aware that the war is lost and new Western assistance may do no more than prolong Ukraine's now-inevitable defeat. Moreover, the problem for Zelenskyy is that his government is no longer calling the diplomatic shots.

"It is the American and British governments that are resisting a diplomatic solution," Basham said. "Instead, they are doubling-down on tactics and rhetoric that, with each passing day, are further detached from the realities on the ground in Ukraine. For this conflict to be resolved, it is Washington and London, rather than Kiev, that needs to read, and act upon, the writing on the wall."

Biden said in an op-ed published on the New York Times on May 31 that the United States will not pressure the Ukrainian government in public or in private to make any territorial concessions to Russia,

Russia launched a special military operation in Ukraine on February 24 in response to calls by the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics for protection from Ukrainian troops. The Russian Defense Ministry said the goal of the operation, which targets Ukrainian military infrastructure, is to "demilitarize and denazify" Ukraine, and to completely liberate Donbas.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said the operation aims to "protect people subjected to genocide by the Kiev regime for eight years." As of March 25, the Russian Armed Forces completed the main tasks of the first stage, significantly reducing the combat potential of Ukraine. Western nations have imposed numerous sanctions on Moscow.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Three Orthodox Parishes in Washington Began Joint Humanitarian Project for Ukraine

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - Three Orthodox parishes in Washington, DC from different church jurisdictions began a joint humanitarian aid project for people affected by the conflict in Ukraine, rector of the Russian St. John the Baptist cathedral Archpriest Victor Potapov told Sputnik.

"A couple of weeks ago, we began a drive to collect used clothing, non-perishable foods, and toiletries," Potapov said.

Two other parishes from the US capital with a large number of Russian and Ukrainian believers, St. Andrew Ukrainian church and St. Nicholas cathedral from the Orthodox Church of America, also participate in the project, he added.

The first container with clothes and other humanitarian aid have already been sent to Europe, from where it will go to Kiev. Now all three parishes are working on collecting items for another container.

"Our parishioners keep sending us help. We continue that effort, and we will continue it for as long as possible," the priest said. "As Christians, our main goal is to pray and to do everything in our power to end this war sooner than later. We have placed the relics of the Kiev Caves Monastery saints in the middle of the church, and every Sunday we serve a special prayer service for the end of hostilities in Ukraine."

In a separate initiative, St. John the Baptist cathedral, which belongs to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) sent about \$10,000 to Taganrog, a city in the south of Russia, which received many refugees from Ukraine.

"We are helping a couple of parishes there, and we received a notification from one of the priests that the money has been received, and they are very grateful, they have sent us photos of some of the refugees," Potapov said.

The priest noted the energy with which believers are participating in the humanitarian aid project.

"Many of our parishioners have been participating in this relief, and everyone is very enthusiastic about donating. People are continuing to bring bags full of clothing, and we have to pack it and send a second container soon," he added.

The Russian parish in Washington also gathered \$35,000 for refugees from Ukraine as part of the Fund for Assistance to the ROCOR (FFA) fundraising, part of which was already sent to ROCOR's diocese in Germany for further distribution.

"The FFA itself has gathered about \$350,000 for Ukrainian relief," Potapov said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Congress Passes Bill to Overhaul US Shipping Industry, Crackdown on Abuse

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The US House of Representatives approved a Senate-passed measure to overhaul the shipping industry and to crackdown on companies exploiting the market through unreasonable fees and denying transportation for American exports.

The Ocean Shipping Reform Act passed the House with a 369-42 vote on Monday and will now head to US President Joe Biden's desk for him to sign into law.

Biden said in a statement after the bill's passage that he looks forward to signing the legislation, adding that it will help lower costs for US retailers, farmers, and consumers.

The US president said shipping carriers increased their prices by as much as 1,000% during the pandemic and often refused to take US exports back to Asia, which cost US farmers and ranchers a lot of money.

The bill would require that the US Federal Maritime Commission investigate complaints about detention and late fees charged by common ocean carriers, determine whether those charges are reasonable, and order refunds for unreasonable charges. The legislation would also prohibit common ocean carriers, marine terminal operators, or ocean transportation intermediaries from unreasonably refusing cargo space when available or resorting to other unfair discriminatory methods.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Says House January 6 Probe Attempt to Keep Him From Seeking Re-election in 2024

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - Former US President Donald Trump said in a statement that the House select committee investigating the January 6 riot is an attempt to keep him from running for president in 2024.

"This is merely an attempt to stop a man that is leading in every poll, against both Republicans and Democrats by wide margins, from running again for the Presidency," Trump said in a 12-page statement on Monday. "The reason I am leading in the polls is because Democrats have caused record inflation, sky high gas prices, energy dependence on our adversaries, the education system is in crisis, illegal aliens are invading our border, the supply chain has crippled our way of life, parents can't get baby formula, mandates have crippled businesses, and our way of life has been crushed by government regulations."

The January 6 committee is a desperate attempt by Democrats to change the narrative of a failing nation and they are hoping the seven hearings held this month and the probe's findings will somehow alter their failing prospects, Trump said.

Trump pointed out that Democrats tried to bring him down with the Russia investigation that found no collusion between the Kremlin and Trump campaign in the 2020 election, but now they're attempting to do it again.

"As President, I suffered years of vicious lies, scandals, and innuendo concerning a fake and contrived narrative of Russia, Russia, Russia," Trump said. "The entire Russia Hoax was a concoction made up by Hillary Clinton and the Democrat Party. It was used as an excuse for her loss, but endured throughout my entire Administration. It was a fake and fraudulent narrative, and now they're trying to do it again."

Moreover, Trump said the riot at the US Capitol was an attempt by Americans to hold officials accountable for alleged criminal activity in the 2020 presidential election.

Trump further said the United States is being destroyed and in a nosedive, and Democrats know that he would correct all of this, but they are doing everything in their power to stop him. Trump added that he and his supporters cannot be stopped and that they have to save America.

In addition, Trump called for the US government to prosecute Meta founder Mark Zuckerberg for allegedly violating US election laws. US election law prevent individuals from donating more than \$5,000 but Zuckerberg donated \$419 million, Trump said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US to Provide \$105Mln in Aid for Horn of Africa After Nuland Visit to Somalia - State Dept

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - The United States will provide food and other urgently required help to Somalia as part of Washington's newly pledged \$105 million for the Horn of Africa, the US State Department said following the visit by Under Secretary for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland.

"In response to the historic drought threatening millions of lives in the Horn of Africa, the United States, through the US Agency for International Development (USAID), is providing nearly \$105 million in critical humanitarian aid to bring immediate relief to the most vulnerable people," USAID said in a press release on Monday.

Nuland earlier in the day held a round table with Special Envoy for Drought Response Abdirahman Abdishakur Warsame and UN agencies in Somalia including the Food and Agriculture Organization, UNICEF, and World Food Program, the State Department said in a separate release.

Nuland visited Mogadishu on Monday where she met with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to offer US support for his security, reconciliation, and reform agenda, according to the release.

"The Under Secretary also expressed continued US support for Somali and African Union-led counterterrorism efforts," the State Department said.

In May, the Biden administration issued an order renewing US military operations in Somalia in order to combat the growing threat of the Al-Shabab terror group.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Toronto Van Attacker Sentenced to Life - Court Ruling

OTTAWA, June 14 (Sputnik) - Alek Minassian, responsible for the 2018 Toronto van attack that left eleven dead and many injured, was sentenced to life in a Superior Court of Toronto.

"Mr. Minassian. Please stand. On count 1, I sentence you to a life segmented. You will not be eligible for parole until 25 years have passed," Justice Anne Molloy said at the hearing as quoted by The Global News Toronto.

Minassian, who carried out the attack targeting women, angered by the fact they would not sleep with him, was charged with ten counts of first-degree murder and 16 of attempted murder. The judge ruled the same on the remaining counts.

The ruling was given in a Superior Court of Toronto. The sentencing was attended by victims, family, and friends affected by the tragedy.

On April 23, 2018, then 25-year-old Alex Minassian drove a van along a sidewalk through one of Toronto's busiest pedestrian corridors for over a mile, ultimately killing eleven and injuring 16.

In March of 2021, at the verdict hearing, Molloy ruled that Minassian was guilty on all counts. During the hearing Molloy said Minassian, admittedly guided by incel ideology - an online subculture of so-called "involuntary celibates," unable to find romantic or sexual partner and espouse hostile views towards sexually active members of the public, particularly women - wanted to achieve fame and notoriety through the attack, and had been fantasizing about committing such a crime for over a decade.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Says Reports of Ukrainian Attack on Donetsk Maternity Hospital 'Extremely Troubling'

UNITED NATIONS, June 14 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is aware of reports of a Ukrainian strike hitting a maternity ward within the self-declared Donetsk People's Republic, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement to Sputnik.

"We've seen the media reports about a maternity hospital in Donetsk. This is extremely troubling. Any attack on civilian infrastructure, especially health facilities, is a clear violation of international law," Dujarric said on Monday.

The UN on Monday also urged all parties to the conflict in Ukraine to respect international humanitarian law amid increased shelling of Donetsk by Ukrainian forces, including a strike on a city market that killed three and injured 18 others. The Donetsk People's Republic in response to the intense shelling requested additional deployments of Russian forces.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Kerry to Visit Mexico Tuesday for Meeting With President Obrador - US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - US Special Envoy for Climate John Kerry will visit Mexico on Tuesday to meet with the country's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, the State Department announced in a release.

"Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry will travel to Mexico City, Mexico, on June 14 to meet with President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and other government officials to continue ongoing engagement to accelerate cooperation in tackling the climate crisis," the release said on Monday.

Last week, US President Joe Biden said the United States will commit \$645 million to the Latin American region to help address food security, migration and climate issues.

The leaders of Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Bolivia decided not to attend the Summit of the Americas after in Los Angeles, California, after the Biden administration excluded Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua from the gathering.

The Mexican and other leaders said the excluded countries are important stakeholders in the region on issues like migration and food, and should be included in any regional discussions on these and other issues.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Officials Warn Oversight Needed to Ensure Aid Sent to Ukraine Not Stolen - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - US officials are concerned that oversight is needed on the \$54 billion in assistance sent to Ukraine since January to ensure that aid is not stolen or misused, the Wall Street Journal reported citing current and former US officials.

"Even if it's a noble cause, there's going to be theft. There's going to be misconduct. There's going to be nepotism. There's going to be stupid decisions being made. It's human nature," the report quoted Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John Sopko as saying on Monday. "A couple of years from now, you're going to be reading stories about waste, fraud and abuse."

The report said that no instances of malfeasance have emerged so far.

A National Security Council spokesperson told the Wall Street Journal that Kiev has assured the Biden administration that they share the United States' concerns about the accountability of the weapon systems delivered to Ukraine.

However, the report cited an official that the United States has little direct knowledge of where US military material goes once it is handed to the Ukrainian government.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Extends US Sanctions Authorities Against Belarus Over Alleged Abuses - Notice

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden announced that he has extended the sanctions authorities against Belarus for an additional year over the government's alleged abuses.

"The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons, and the Belarusian regime's harmful activities and long-standing abuses, continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States," Biden said in a notice on Tuesday. "Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13405."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Extends National Emergency With Respect to North Korea - Notice to Congress

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden announced that he has extended the the national emergency with respect to North Korea as the country's proliferation of weapons-usable fissile material threatens the United States.

"The existence and risk of the proliferation of weapons-usable fissile material on the Korean Peninsula and the actions and policies of the Government of North Korea continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States," Biden said in a notice to Congress on Tuesday. "Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for one year the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13466 with respect to North Korea."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Idaho Officers Receive Threats After Arresting Nationalists at Pride Event - Police Chief

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - Police officers in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, are getting death threats from multiple callers after they arrested dozens of white nationalists during a Pride event on Saturday, Police Chief Lee White told reporters.

The police chief told reporters that since Saturday, there have been at least 149 calls, one half of which was from people who wanted to praise the police, while the other half was from people who wanted nothing more than to express their outrage.

"And the other 50 percent, who are completely anonymous, who want nothing more than to scream and yell at us and use some really choice words, offer death threats against myself and other members of the police department merely for doing our jobs," White said on Monday.

"Those people obviously remain anonymous."

White noted that the majority of the threats were made by those callers who live outside of Coeur d'Alene while one caller being from as far as Norway.

According to White, during an annual lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer plus (LGBTQ+) event on Saturday, police arrested a group of 31 people who were allegedly going to attack the participants of the event and were members of Patriot Front nationalist group.

"We likely stopped a riot from happening downtown," White said.

The alleged rioters had smoke grenades and various riot gear with them and arrived on the scene in a U-Haul truck, White added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

White House Says Biden Potential Visit to Saudi Arabia Not Only About Asking for Oil

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) - White House Spokesperson Karine Jean-Pierre said looking at any potential visit by US President Joe Biden to Saudi Arabia as only about oil would be wrong.

"To view [US] engagement with Saudi Arabia on energy security, as asking for oil is simply wrong, and a misunderstanding of both the complexity of that issue and our multifaceted discussions with the Saudis," Jean-Pierre said at a presser on Monday when asked about Biden's potential trip. "That said, Saudi Arabia is the chair as you know, of OPEC plus and its largest exporter. Of course, we discuss energy with Saudi government as we do with oil producers around the world, and we welcome its leadership in achieving a consensus amongst the group members last week."

The Wall Street Journal reported over the weekend citing officials with direct knowledge of Biden's plans that his trip to Saudi Arabia, which will take place next month, is expected to be officially announced on Monday.

Biden will reportedly travel to Saudi Arabia in July as part of a broader trip to the region, which will also include a stop in Israel, one official told the newspaper on Saturday.

During his trip, the US president is expected to meet with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud.

According to the White House press pool, asked whether he has decided to go to Saudi Arabia, Biden told journalists on Saturday "No, not yet."

On Friday, CNN reported citing senior US officials that the Biden administration and the Saudi leadership had agreed to move past differences over the killing of columnist Jamal Khashoggi amid the need to boost oil production.

Biden is ready to reset relations with Saudi Arabia in order to repair ties between the two allies, but he will raise Khashoggi's killing when meeting with the Saudi Crown Prince in July, the report said.

Biden will fly directly from Tel Aviv to Riyadh during his trip to the Middle East next month, according to CNN. Saudi Arabia, Israel and the other countries in the Middle East reportedly share a significant agenda that includes ending wars and bringing stability to the region through diplomacy.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UPDATE - Wall Street Ends in Bear-Market Territory as Inflation Triggers Aggressive Rate Hike Fears

(Updates with more information in paras 1-4, 6, 8-13; modifies headline)

NEW YORK, June 13 (Sputnik) - Wall Street ended in bear-market territory on Monday, with the S&P 500 and Nasdaq Composite indices losing more than 20% on the year, as runaway inflation triggered fears that the Federal Reserve might be more aggressive with a new round of interest rate hikes beginning this week.

The S&P 500, representing the top 500 US stocks, closed at 3,750 points, down 3.9% on the day and 21.3% on the year.

The Nasdaq Composite, which comprises marquee technology names such as Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google, finished at 10,809, for a decline of 4.7% on the day and 30.9% on the year. The Dow Jones Industrial Average, comprising stocks of 30 large US corporations, settled at 30,517, off 2.7% on the day and 16% on the year.

By broad market definition, any asset that loses 20% or more of its value from its most recent high or period like a quarter is defined as being in a bear market.

Stocks have been grinding lower for the past four days, with the selloff accelerating after the Labor Department reported on Friday that the US Consumer Price Index grew by 8.6% in the year to May. That was an indication that inflation was expanding at its fastest rate since 1981, as the cost of virtually everything - from food to fuel, shelter and clothing - spiked last month. Separately, the University of Michigan said its closely-followed Consumer Sentiment Index sank to a record low in its latest survey for June as Americans became increasingly disillusioned about inflation taking a bigger bite of their paychecks, particularly after the pump price of gasoline exceeded \$5 a gallon last week for the first time ever last week. Consumer spending accounts for 70% of the US economy.

The Federal Reserve's tolerance for inflation is just 2% per year and it has vowed to raise interest rates, even slow the economy if necessary, to bring price growth back to its target.

After leaving rates at between zero and 0.25% for a period of two years due to the coronavirus outbreak, the US central bank's Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) raised them in March by 25 basis points, or a quarter-percentage point, and in May by 50 basis points, or a half-percentage point.

The June meeting of the FOMC, due on Wednesday, was initially expected to result in another half-point rise. But with the hotter-than-expected CPI reading for May, some economists are speculating that the central bank might be toying with a 75 basis point, or three-quarter percentage point, hike instead.

"Inflation will remain sticky and lead to sharply weaker purchasing power and consumption over the coming quarters," Ed Moya, analyst at online trading platform OANDA, said. "That supports the idea the Fed will be able to move forward with more aggressive rate hikes over the next few meetings. If Wall Street begins to price in much more aggressive Fed tightening, technical selling could drag the S&P 500 towards the 3,500 level."

The US economy expanded by 5.7% in 2021, also growing at its fastest pace in four decades after a 3.5% tumble in 2020 due to complications caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Since the start of this year though, US GDP growth has been on a weaker trajectory, posting a negative growth of 1.4% for the first quarter. That slowdown has reinforced fears that the United States may be headed for a recession, especially with aggressive rate hikes planned by the Federal Reserve. Technically, the economy needs two straight quarters of negative growth to be in recession, with the first quarter already being in the red.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY

WASHINGTON, June 14 (Sputnik) -

UKRAINE DEVELOPMENTS

- * The Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) is asking Russia for "additional allied forces" in connection with the increased shelling of Donetsk by Ukrainian troops, DPR head Denis Pushilin said on Monday.
- * Donetsk was subjected to yet another round of shelling by Ukrainian troops on Monday as explosions are heard in the city center and a busy market there has specifically been targeted, a Sputnik correspondent reported.
- * The United Nations is in contact with all parties concerned about the possibility of expanding its humanitarian presence in Ukraine, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

KOREAN PENINSULA

- * The United States is concerned about the possibility of another nuclear test by North Korea amid an increased frequency of weapons tests since the start of the year and is prepared to make military adjustments in response, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Monday.
- * Seoul will discuss with Tehran and Washington the issue of Iran's frozen funds that is impacting bilateral economic relations and hopes that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear negotiations are resolved soon, Foreign Minister Park Jin said.
- * Continued tests of weapons including nukes and missiles by North Korea will only lead to further military deterrence measures and international sanctions against Pyongyang, Park Jin said.

SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA

- * The United States is coordinating closely with its G7 partners to strengthen sanctions against Russia over its special military operation in Ukraine, US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Dereck Hogan said on Monday.
- * The US sanctions imposed on Russian rough diamonds are mostly having a serious impact on India's supply chain, Antwerp World Diamond Centre head of media relations Tom Neys told Sputnik.

US-CHINA TALKS

- * US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Chinese Communist Party Politburo Member Yang Jiechi had a candid and productive discussion about key issues between the two countries, the White House said on Monday.
- * Sullivan in a 4.5-hour meeting with Yang Jiechi pushed for the release of American citizens detained in China and reiterated Washington's concerns over Beijing's alleged assistance for Russia, a senior administration official said.

GLOBAL ECONOMY

- * US GDP growth is expected to whittle down to zero next year as the Federal Reserve pounds the economy with continual interest rate hikes to overcome the worst inflation in four decades, Fitch Ratings said in the June edition of its Global Economic Outlook on Monday.

* Germany is working on a multibillion euro loan to maintain the operations of Gazprom Germania GmbH, a former subsidiary of Russian energy giant Gazprom, the Financial Times reported.

* A "stuck transaction" paused for a few hours the withdrawal of Bitcoin from the Binance, the world largest cryptocurrency exchange said.

* The price of Bitcoin fell on Monday to its lowest level since December 2020 on widespread risk aversion across US markets by investors who fear runaway inflation might make the Federal Reserve more aggressive with a new round of interest rate hikes beginning this week.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Canadian Government Can Barely Handle Surge in Passport Applications - Minister

OTTAWA, June 13 (Sputnik) - The Canadian authorities are struggling with delivering passports to the citizens amid a record in the number of applications that has overwhelmed Service Canada, Children, Families and Social Development Minister Karina Gould said on Monday. "After two years of travel restrictions, Canada and many other countries around the world are seeing a significant surge in demand for passports," Gould said. "As is the case in many countries, the size and suddenness of this surge has created delays for Canadians in getting the passport services to which they are entitled."

Gould said delays in passport issuance are unacceptable but added that measures have been taken to address the problem.

"Service Canada Center employees are working overtime and on weekends. In many locations, Service Canada has also adapted hours of service for clients who cannot be accommodated during regular hours," she said.

Gould also said Service Canada will hire 600 employees in addition to the existing 600 and will train them as soon as possible.

In addition, the government will simplify renewal of passports issued in the past 15 years, open new processing locations and increase in-person services.

From April 2021 to March 31, 2022, Services Canada delivered 1.27 million passports.

However, there have been 542,000 passport applications since April.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Ohio Approves New Law Making It Easier for Teachers to Have Guns in Schools - Governor

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The governor of the US state of Ohio on Monday signed a bill into law making it easier for teachers and school employees to carry firearms in schools by reducing the number of hours of training required from 700 to 24.

"Our goal is to continue to help our public and private schools get the tools they need to protect our children," Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine said at a signing ceremony for the legislation.

The governor said the old 700-hour requirement was mostly intended for law enforcement, and most of the training does not relate directly to school safety, making it unnecessary for teachers. DeWine, a Republican who assumed office in 2019 and who is running for re-election, said local school districts could still decide to ban firearms on school campuses.

The bill was opposed by significant number of citizens, hundreds of whom packed into committee rooms during hearings in November and December last year, including groups seeking gun reform, teachers, school board members, police union representatives, police chiefs and others.

Robert Meader, retired police commander of the Ohio Division of Police, called the new requirements woefully inadequate, contending that it would "cause harmful accidents and potentially even needless deaths."

DeWine also signed into law another gun bill allows gun owners to carry a concealed handgun without a license.

The legislation comes in the wake of a deadly school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, where an 18-year-old gunman killed 19 children and two teachers. That incident came just days after another 18-year-old white man walked into a Buffalo supermarket and shot and killed 11 African Americans.

This year alone, the US has seen more than 250 mass shootings, including 27 at schools, according to the Gun Violence Archive, an independent data collection organization.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Working to Prevent Sale of Russian Grain Allegedly Stolen From Ukraine - White House

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United States is working to prevent the sale of grain allegedly pilfered by Russia from Ukraine on the international market, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said on Monday.

"We are working with other countries to prevent the sale of grain that has likely been stolen from Ukraine," Jean-Pierre said during a press briefing when asked about reports that the US warned African nations not to purchase Russian grain.

The UN World Food Programme has been unable to verify allegations of Russia pilfering Ukrainian grain, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said last week.

The US efforts take place amid worldwide food supply concerns and rising prices, which the Biden administration has blamed on a combination of economic challenges, including supply shocks resulting from Russia's special operation in Ukraine.

However, the Kremlin has placed responsibility for rising food prices and instability on sanctions imposed by the US and its allies on Russia and Belarus, who are major exporters of fertilizer and other agricultural products on the world market.

Russia has rejected Western accusations of blocking grain exports from Ukraine and repeatedly stressed that seaports would be reopened upon the clearing of Ukrainian naval mines in the Black Sea.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Biden Signs Law to Study Creating National Museum of Asian Pacific American History

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US President Joe Biden on Tuesday signed into law a measure seeking to initiate a special commission to study building a National Museum of Asian Pacific American History and Culture.

"Today, I am honored to sign into law something that is long overdue, the National Museum of Asian Pacific American History and Culture," Biden said during the ceremony at the White House.

Biden noted the critical role people of Asian heritage have played in US history, particularly during World War II.

The US president also emphasized the importance of creating institutions like museums for the future generations.

"Museums of this magnitude and this consequence are going to inspire and educate. More than anything else this can help people see themselves in a story of America," Biden said.

Creating such a museum is important to the Biden administration because so many people from around the world one day will walk in it and better understand the idea of America, Biden added. The commission should develop a fundraising plan to support the museum and decide on other relevant issues, including creating a collection and identifying potential locations in Washington, DC.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Ex-Marine Files Petition With UN Seeking Compensation for Detention in Russia - Release

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - Former US Marine Trevor Reed has filed a petition with the United Nations to hold the Russian government responsible for his detention and is seeking compensation, a press release posted by the Reed family spokesperson Jonathan Franks said on Monday.

"Today, Trevor R. Reed filed a petition with the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to begin the process of holding the Russian government accountable for illegally and inhumanly imprisoning Trevor for nearly three years," the press release said.

The petition is a 13,000-word document based on legal standards and first-hand witness accounts that detail what Reed has characterized as being "many injustices and abuses" he allegedly suffered, the release said.

"On this evidence, the petition asks that the Working Group issue a Formal Opinion declaring that Trevor's 985-day detention in Russia was arbitrary and unlawful and lawful to fundamental principles of international law: the right to liberty, the right to a fair trial, and the right to due process of law," the release said.

The petition also requests a declaration that Russia must compensate Reed for its violation of his rights, the release added.

In April, Washington and Moscow exchanged Russian pilot Konstantin Yaroshenko, who was serving a prison sentence in the United States, and Reed, who was sentenced to nine years in Russia for disorderly conduct and fighting police officers, after having engaged in lengthy negotiations.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Govt. Gives SpaceX Environmental Approval for Super Heavy Starship Project - FAA

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The Biden administration has given SpaceX the environmental approval to go ahead with its Starship/Super Heavy project, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced in a statement on Monday.

"The FAA determined that the Proposed Action would not result in significant environmental consequences and has issued a Mitigated Finding of No Significant Impact/Record of Decision," the statement said.

However, the completion of the proposed action will not guarantee that the FAA will issue a launch license as SpaceX's application also must meet FAA safety, risk and financial responsibility requirements, the agency has noted in previous statements.

"Should any future license or permit be issued to SpaceX to perform any aspect of the Proposed Action, the FAA will ensure that SpaceX implements these mitigation measures as conditions for licensure," the statement said.

As part of the Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation process, the US Fish and Wildlife Service issued a Biological Opinion that concludes the proposed action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any federally listed species or adversely modify designated critical habitat, the statement added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Says Cross-Border Aid Channels Remain Critical for Humanitarian Deliveries to Syria

UNITED NATIONS, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United Nations believes that the existing cross-border mechanism is still critical to delivering humanitarian aid to Syrians, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

In July, the UN Security Council is set to vote on whether to renew the UN mandate for the cross-border mechanism that allows aid to reach Syria through the Bab al-Hawa crossing in Turkey.

"The cross-border access point remains critical to our ability to deliver humanitarian aid to those Syrian men, women who need it in those areas," Dujarric told a briefing.

The spokesman reaffirmed the UN's long-standing position that the more access points, the easier it is to deliver aid.

"Obviously, more crossing points are better. We have always been very clear about that. We will, of course, also continue the cross-line operations, which are also extremely important," the spokesman said.

In July 2021, resolution 2585 extending the use of the Bab al-Hawa border crossing was passed as a result of a compromise between Russian and US negotiators. The renewed mandate expires on July 10, 2022, with concerns raised that the current geopolitical situation may overshadow new efforts to find an agreement.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

S. Korean Foreign Minister Says Will Discuss Iran's Frozen Funds With Tehran, Washington (Updates with background in paras 4-6)

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - South Korea will discuss with Iran and the United States the issue of the frozen Iranian funds impacting economic ties between Tehran and Seoul and concurrently hopes that negotiations on the nuclear agreement – formally known as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - are resolved soon, Foreign Minister Park Jin said on Monday.

"With regard to Iran, we want to have a mutually beneficial relationship, although we have some obstacles [with regard to] frozen funds. [South] Korea will discuss it with Iran and also with the United States," Park said during a press event with US counterpart Antony Blinken. "And in terms of JCPOA negotiations, we hope that this issue can be resolved as soon as possible." Park said more diplomacy and dialogue is needed with Iran in order to have a positive result from nuclear negotiations.

In April, the IRNA news agency reported that Iran had signed an agreement with some countries to unfreeze its assets worth multiple billions of dollars. However, the amount was reportedly to be transferred to Iranian bank accounts in Oman. IRNA did not name the countries in question. On April 11, Iran confirmed that South Korea had agreed to unfreeze the country's assets worth \$7 billion that were locked in two banks in the country.

The United States and its allies have imposed comprehensive economic sanctions on Iran over due to its nuclear program, including the freezing of Iranian funds. Iran President Ibrahim Raisi has repeatedly his US counterpart Joe Biden to unfreeze about \$10 billion of Iranian assets. Raisi has also called on Japan to unfreeze Iran's funds.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Says in Talks With All Sides Involved About Increasing Humanitarian Presence in Ukraine

UNITED NATIONS, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is in contact with all parties concerned about the possibility of expanding its humanitarian presence in Ukraine, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

"I can tell you that our colleagues in Kiev are continuing discussions with all the parties involved in order to try to increase our humanitarian presence in more areas because what is clear is that people need help," the spokesman said, when asked if the UN has humanitarian presence in the Russian-controlled city of Mariupol.

The spokesman noted he is unaware of the UN having humanitarian staff in Mariupol.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Growth Seen as 'Barely Positive' Next Year Amid Interest Rate Hikes - Fitch

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US GDP growth is expected to whittle down to zero next year as the Federal Reserve pounds the economy with continual interest rate hikes to overcome the worst inflation in four decades, Fitch Ratings said in the June edition of its Global Economic Outlook on Monday.

"The US economy has near-term momentum, with consumer spending supported by strong growth in jobs and nominal wages," Fitch said. "But growth is set to slow from mid-2023 to barely positive rates in quarterly terms due to aggressive monetary tightening. Fed policy stance will become restrictive. Inflation challenges have become so pronounced that central banks are being forced to respond, abandoning prior forward guidance."

The US economy expanded by 5.7% in 2021, also growing at the fastest pace in four decades after a 3.5% tumble in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic measures.

Since the start of this year though, US GDP growth has been on a weaker trajectory, posting a negative 1.4% for the first quarter. That slowdown has reinforced fears that the United States may be headed for a recession, especially with aggressive interest rate hikes planned by the Federal Reserve. Technically, the economy needs two straight quarters of negative growth to be in recession, with the first quarter already being in the red.

After leaving interest rates at between zero and 0.25% for a period of two years due to the coronavirus outbreak, the Federal Reserve raised them in March by 25 basis points, or a quarter-percentage point, and in May by 50 basis points, or a half-percentage point.

The Federal Reserve was initially expected to add another half-point to the interest rates for its June hike this year. But that was before the US Labor Department reported on Friday that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) grew by 8.6% in the year to May as the cost of virtually everything - from food to fuel, shelter and clothing - spiked last month. Now some economists are

speculating that the US central bank might be toying with a 75 basis point increase, or three-quarter percentage point, instead.

The Federal Reserve's tolerance for inflation is 2% per year and the central bank has vowed to raise rates non-stop to get indicators like the CPI to that level. Economists have said they believe the Federal Reserve will lift rates from the current 1% to between 3% and 4% by the end of the year.

Fitch acknowledged in its outlook the expectations for continuous increases in interest rates.

"We now expect the Fed to raise interest rates to 3% by 4Q22 and to 3.5% by 1Q23, i.e. above its estimates of the neutral rate and hence to a 'restrictive' stance," it said.

Fitch also said there was a pronounced risk of inflation becoming embedded as workers resist real wage cuts amidst high job turnover and price expectations continue to rise.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Says Bachelet Has All Support as Rights Boss Forgoes 2nd Term After China Trip Backlash

UNITED NATIONS, June 13 (Sputnik) - Outgoing UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet has entire support of Secretary General Antonio Guterres, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

Bachelet, who has recently been criticized for allegedly not doing enough to address human rights issues in China's Xinjiang, said Monday she would not go after a second term. She denied that her departure is related to the criticism.

"The Secretary General said she continues to have his full support. Mr Guterres will always value her wisdom, strong voice and success in ensuring human rights underpin the actions of the United Nations," Dujarric told a briefing.

The UN spokesman noted that the secretary general supported her trip to China and that the UN will now seek the next best advocate for human rights around the world.

Bachelet paid a long-awaited UN official visit to China in late May to report on alleged human rights abuses in China's Xinjiang region. It was the first trip to the country by the UN human rights chief since 2005.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

S. Korean Foreign Minister Says Will Discuss Frozen Iranian Funds With Iran, US

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - South Korea will discuss with Iran and the United States the issue of frozen Iranian funds impacting economic ties between Tehran and Seoul and hopes that Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear negotiations are resolved soon, Foreign Minister Park Jin said on Monday.

"With regard to Iran, we want to have a mutually beneficial relationship, although we have some obstacles [with regard to] frozen funds. [South] Korea will discuss it with Iran and also with the United States," Park said during a press event alongside US counterpart Antony Blinken. "And in terms of JCPOA negotiations, we hope that this issue can be resolved as soon as possible." More diplomacy and dialogue is needed with Iran in order to have a positive result from nuclear negotiations, Park added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

G7 Nations Working Closely on How to Strengthen Sanctions Against Russia - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United States is coordinating closely with its G7 partners to strengthen sanctions against Russia over its special military operation in Ukraine, US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Dereck Hogan said on Monday.

"We are very much working on how do we strengthen our sanctions package [against Russia] ... we are in close coordination with G7 member states," Hogan said.

About using frozen Russian bank assets for reconstruction of Ukraine, Hogan said the United States and G7 member states have many legal issues to consider to take such action.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Expects More Meetings With Top Chinese Officials After Sullivan-Yang Talks – Official

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) – The United States expects to see more meetings between senior US and Chinese officials in the months ahead following a meeting between US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Chinese Communist Party Politburo Member Yang Jiechi earlier in the day, a senior US administration official said on Monday.

"Both Jake and director Yang expressed interest and underscored the importance of maintaining open lines of communication at all levels," the official said during a press briefing. "I'd expect to see you know, additional potential meetings in the months ahead."

The official added that, so far, a meeting between US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping is not planned.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Concerned About Possible DPRK Nuclear Test, Ready to Adjust Military Posture - Blinken

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United States is concerned about the possibility of another nuclear test by North Korea amid an increased frequency of weapons tests since the start of the year and is prepared to make military adjustments in response, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Monday during a press event alongside his South Korean counterpart. "We remain concerned about the prospects for what would be a seventh nuclear test over multiple administrations. We know that the North Koreans have done preparations for such a test. We are being extremely vigilant about that. We are in very close touch with our close allies and partners, starting with the Republic of Korea, also with Japan and others, to be able to respond quickly should the North Koreans proceed with such a test," Blinken said. The US is prepared to make both short- and longer-term adjustments to military posture as appropriate, Blinken added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Sullivan, Yang in 4.5-Hour Meeting Discuss Release of US Citizens in China - Official
WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in a 4.5-hour meeting with China's Politburo Member Yang Jiechi pushed for the release of American citizens detained in China and reiterated Washington's concerns over Beijing's alleged assistance for Russia, a senior administration official said on Monday.

The two met in Luxembourg earlier in the day.

"The meeting was about 4.5 hours long, covered a range of issues of interest for United States and the international community. This meeting followed their May 18 phone call and reflects our ongoing efforts to manage the competition with PRC responsibly by maintaining open lines of communication," the official told reporters. "The National Security Adviser pressed for progress on key issues of concern to the United States, in particular, underscoring the need for the release of American citizens wrongfully detained and subjected to exit bans in China. On this issue in particular, he stressed this as a personal priority for both himself and for the President." Sullivan also reiterated US concerns with respect to certain kinds of assistance to Russia, the official added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

DPRK Provocations Will Lead to More Deterrence, Sanctions - S. Korean Foreign Minister

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - Continued tests of weapons including nukes and missiles by North Korea will only lead to further military deterrence measures and international sanctions against Pyongyang, South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin said on Monday.

"We affirm that any North Korean provocations, including a nuclear test, would be met with a united and firm response from our alliance and the international community," Park said during a press availability with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. "Pyongyang's continuous

provocations will only lead to strengthened deterrence of the alliance and stronger international sanctions measures."

Park and Blinken met amid an increased frequency of weapons tests by the DPRK this year, including looming concerns of a possible nuclear test, according to the chief diplomats.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US, South Korea Open for Dialogue With North Korea Without Preconditions - Chief Diplomats

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United States and South Korea are both open to engaging in dialogue with North Korea without preconditions despite a recent increase in weapons tests by Pyongyang, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his ROK counterpart Park Jin said on Monday.

"Let me emphasize that the United States has absolutely no hostile intent towards the DPRK. We're open to dialogue without preconditions," Blinken said during a press availability alongside Park.

South Korea also seeks dialogue with North Korea without preconditions and is prepared to take a more "flexible and open-minded approach to diplomacy" with Pyongyang, Park said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Providing Ukraine \$1.5Bln Per Month in Next 4-5 Months to Keep Gov't Open - State Dept.

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United States will provide Ukraine with \$1.5 billion per month over the next four to five months to support efforts to keep the Ukrainian government open, US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Dereck Hogan said on Monday.

"Our efforts are focused in on in four areas, continuity of government that is basically providing us the assistance to keep the lights on, so this is our direct budget support," Hogan said during a panel discussion hosted by the Wilson Center. "We've already committed a billion dollars to that going through mechanisms to be able to deliver that assistance, direct budget support, and we've got more in the pipeline roughly \$1.5 billion per month over the next four to five months."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Binance Pauses Bitcoin Withdrawal Due to 'Stuck Transaction' Amid Flight Risk

NEW YORK, June 13 (Sputnik) - A "stuck transaction" paused for a few hours the withdrawal of Bitcoin from the Binance, the world largest cryptocurrency exchange said on Monday.

"Temporary pause of \$BTC (Bitcoin) withdrawals on Binance due to a stuck transaction causing a backlog," the exchange said via Twitter at 8:00 a.m. ET (12:00 GMT).

However, a follow-up tweet for hours later said that "Bitcoin network withdrawals have now resumed on Binance."

The disruption on the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange came as the price of Bitcoin tumbled on Monday to its lowest since December 2020 amid risk aversion across US markets ahead of the Federal Reserve on Wednesday, when the US central bank is expected to raise interest rates for a third time this year.

After leaving interest rates at between zero and 0.25% for a period of two years due to the coronavirus outbreak, the Federal Reserve raised them by 25 basis points, or a quarter-percentage point, in March and 50 basis points, or a half-percentage point, in May. While the June meeting was initially expected to result in another half-point rise, some economists are speculating the US central bank could now be toying with a 75 basis point, or three-quarter percentage point, hike due to runaway inflation.

On Friday, the US Labor Department reported that the Consumer Price Index grew by 8.6% in the year to May, expanding by its fastest rate since 1981, as the cost of virtually everything - from food to fuel, shelter and clothing - spiked last month.

Aside from Bitcoin's plunge on Monday, US stocks also tumbled with Wall Street's S&P 500 and Nasdaq Composite indexes losing more than 20% on the year to enter the so-called bear-market territory.

In a separate development on Monday, Binance and its CEO Brian Shroder were sued by US investor Jeffrey Lockhart, who alleged that the cryptocurrency exchange falsely marketed the Terra USD as a safe asset prior to the collapse in the value of that stablecoin last month.

Stablecoins are digital tokens pegged to the value of traditional risk assets, such as the US dollar, and are sought after as safe havens in times of trouble in cryptocurrency markets. But Terra witnessed an unusual plunge last month, breaking its 1:1 peg with the dollar, contributing to a tumble as well in Bitcoin and other non-stable coins.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN Urges Respect for International Humanitarian Law After Shelling of Donetsk

UNITED NATIONS, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United Nations urges all parties to the Ukraine conflict to respect international humanitarian law, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Monday after the shelling of Donetsk by Ukrainian forces.

"Daily shellings and bombardments have led to civilian casualties. Areas very close to UN facilities have been affected by the fighting. This morning for example a market and an apartment building were hit in Donetsk when a shell landed in populated areas in the center of the city, 50 meters from the UN compound," Dujarric told a briefing.

Dujarric noted that insecurity and bureaucratic difficulties prevent the UN from providing life-saving assistance in those areas.

"We again stress that all parties to the conflict must respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians," he added.

Donetsk has been shelled by Ukrainian forces throughout Monday. A strike hit a city market, killing three people and injuring 18. Other districts of Donetsk such as Budennovsky, Kuibyshevsky and Kirovsky were also subjected to shelling.

In the wake of the intense shelling, the Donetsk People's Republic has asked Russia for the deployment of "additional allied forces."

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Canada Invests in Fertilizer Production to Fill Void Left by Russia Sanctions - Minister

OTTAWA, June 13 (Sputnik) - The Canadian government has signed an agreement with the Australian mining company BHP to further develop potash production in Canada, Innovation, Science and Industry Minister Francois Philippe Champagne said on Monday.

"We know how critical potash is for our country when it comes to food security, and that's why we are pleased to partner with BHP on this very ambitious project that will bring strong economic benefits to Saskatchewan, while also helping cement Canada's mining industry as the best in the world as we pivot toward a zero-emissions future," Champagne said.

BHP plans to invest over \$5.8 billion and estimates the facility will start operations by 2027 with an expected production in excess of 4.5 million tons of potash annually - a 22% increase in Canada's output.

Canada, Australia and their allies comprising the collective West have imposed comprehensive sanctions against Russia - and neighboring Belarus - for launching a special military operation in Ukraine that include sanctions on fertilizer exports. Russia and Belarus produce close to 17% of the global supply worth nearly \$9 billion.

In addition to sanctions on fertilizers, the special military operation has made more difficult the supply of Ukrainian grains. Ukraine is the world's fifth ranked exporter of grains.

The Russian government has repeatedly said that it has secured not one but two water corridors for grain exports but has pointed out the collective West must lift sanctions for trade to resume. Moscow has also noted that the easiest way to export grains on land is as has been done thus far - via Belarus.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Sullivan, China's Yang Hold 'Productive' Talks on Key Bilateral Issues - White House

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Chinese Communist Party Politburo Member Yang Jiechi had a candid and productive discussion about key issues between the two countries, the White House said on Monday.

"National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met today with Chinese Communist Party Politburo Member and Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission Yang Jiechi in Luxembourg," the White House said in a press release. "This meeting, which followed their May 18 phone call, included candid, substantive, and productive discussion of a number of regional and global security issues, as well as key issues in U.S.-China relations."

Sullivan underscored the importance of maintaining open lines of communication to manage competition between the two superpower countries, the release added.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Faces Significant Logistics Challenge in Indo-Pacific Region - Deputy Defense Secretary

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United States is facing a "significant logistics challenge" in the Indo-Pacific region that is worsened by its reliance on fuel, US Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks said on Monday.

"For the United States to be effective in the Pacific, we already know we have a significant logistics challenge, worsened by the reliance that we have on fuel. So, making sure we understand how to go after that logistics challenge," Hicks said during the Defense One summit. The logistics lesson is one of the main ones the United States is drawing from the conflict in Ukraine, where Russia allegedly is facing substantial logistics problems even though it is operating on its border, Hicks added.

On Sunday, Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe said the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy is aimed at fomenting confrontation in the region to deter China.

Beijing has made it clear that it will defend China's territorial integrity and engage in war if another country attempts to separate Taiwan from the mainland.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Public's Support for Russia Sanctions, Global Role Down as Midterms Near - Think-Tank

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The US public's support for anti-Russia sanctions has significantly fallen as Americans feel an urgency for the Biden administration to focus on addressing rising inflation and fuel prices at home, in a trend indicating preference for a more modest role on the world stage ahead of the November midterms, Director of the Democracy Institute think-tank Patrick Basham told Sputnik.

A Pew Research Center poll released on Friday showed that a majority of Americans believe the Biden administration should focus on solving problems at home rather than overseas despite some, mostly elderly, holding a contrary view.

"Today, Americans remain supportive of Ukraine in the conflict and critical of Russia, but their support for specific anti-Russian measures has fallen significantly," Basham said. "Americans are now divided on continuing economic sanctions. They are opposed to the recent \$40 billion aid package. Revealing, our polling shows they are willing to accept a Ukrainian defeat, and most would not support any American effort to remove Russian President Vladimir Putin from office."

As most US voters' economic situations become more precarious, they are concluding that the Biden administration's foreign policy has helped to turn America's cost-of-living and supply chain problems into genuine crises, Basham said.

Americans are paying an average all-time high record of five dollars for a gallon of regular gasoline as of Saturday, and the trend will likely continue to climb as it has over the past weeks. Moreover, the US Consumer Price Index grew by 8.6% during the year to May, expanding by its fastest rate since 1981, as the cost of virtually everything - from food to fuel, shelter and clothing - rose again last month, according to the US Labor Department.

Joe Biden's approval rating meanwhile hit a new low of 39% last week, compared to Donald Trump's 45% at a similar point in his presidency, a Morning Consult/Politico poll showed. Americans are also becoming impatient with the US government's ability to influence events on the ground in Ukraine, Basham said, adding that once it became obvious that the Biden administration's overall goal was Putin's exit from the Kremlin, rather than simply the defense of Ukraine, they began to recognize the potential length and breadth – and economic cost – of the US intervention.

Biden during a speech in Poland in March said Putin cannot remain in power, which the White House immediately walked back, emphasizing it did not seek regime change in Russia.

The Biden administration has blamed President Putin and his special military operation in Ukraine for the inflation and rising fuel prices in the United States, but he has avoided explaining that sanctions from the United States and its European allies are having substantial consequences on the global economy as well.

US FOREIGN POLICY TO IMPACT 2022 MIDTERMS, 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

US voters will likely support candidates in the 2022 midterms and 2024 US presidential candidate who will advocate for a more modest global role for America considering the United States' involvement in Ukraine is becoming less popular and with chaotic US exit from Afghanistan, Basham said.

"The most successful candidates in 2022, and probably in 2024, too, will be those that credibly present themselves as patriotic nationalists who will do what they believe to be best for America regardless of whether their actions are supported by their parties' foreign policy establishments, foreign governments, or globalist institutions," Basham said.

The US public is seeing that expansionist and interventionist foreign policy outweighs the benefits as skepticism grows about America's ability to shape global events for the better, Basham said.

IMPACT OF ANTI-RUSSIA SANCTIONS FROM THE WEST

The European Union plans to ban most energy imports from Russia by the end of 2022, but the United States supports a plan to allow Russian energy exports to flow but under a price cap to reduce the revenue Moscow makes from its energy products.

Western sanctions have already complicated trade around the world, especially on vital Russian exports of fertilizer and other agricultural products. Although the United States has some waivers in place to allow such exports, banks are so worried about possibly violating sanctions that some transactions are being terminated, according to Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia.

"Anti-Russian Western sanctions will have a negative, very tangible impact upon the global economic recovery," Basham said. "It has been obvious for some time that the sanctions either already have or soon will cause energy and food costs to increase considerably across Western nations. The subsequent anti-inflation campaigns from various central banks will ensure that economic growth across is tepid at best and may actually stall completely. "

Basham pointed out that the large number of nations in the Global South will suffer comparatively less than the Western nations because their energy and commercial relationships with Russia and China will be largely unaffected and, in many cases, will actually deepen to the respective countries' mutual benefit.

However, less economic growth and less wealth among Western nations will reduce their demand for imports from non-Western nations, which will drag growth in many export-led non-Western economies, Basham said.

AMERICAN FOREIGN FIGHTERS IN UKRAINE, CONCERNS OVER THOSE JOINING NEO-NAZIS

Last month, Politico reported, citing a US intelligence document it obtained, that US Customs and Border Protection is questioning American volunteers suspected of going to Ukraine to fight against Russia over concerns that some Americans may join extremist groups like the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, and return to the United States to become a domestic threat.

US Customs and Border Protection and the US Department of Justice did not respond to requests from Sputnik for comment on this matter.

"I think it is unlikely that those Americans who choose to join the Azov Battalion [AB] because of the AB's well-documented neo-Nazi sympathies will be a greater threat upon their return to America," Basham said. "Due to their abhorrent beliefs, such misguided individuals would be a potential domestic threat whether they did or did not spend time amidst kindred spirits in Ukraine."

The possibility of Americans fighting for the Azov Battalion highlights one of the many double standards of the Biden administration's embrace of the Ukrainian government, Basham said.

"As President Biden, Vice President [Kamala] Harris, and other senior administration figures spend considerable amounts of time characterizing their domestic political opponents as fascists, racists, and White supremacists, there is considerable irony, in the survival of the US-bankrolled Ukrainian government depending almost entirely upon the battlefield abilities of the Azov Battalion, a military outfit espousing beliefs diametrically opposite to those espoused by Biden and Harris," Basham said.

However, Basham does not believe American volunteers fighting on the Ukrainian side against Russia will itself escalate tensions between the United States and Russia.

"Any chance that such participation could have such an influence is watered-down by the return home already of many of these now quite demoralized volunteers, who have returned with tales of Russian superiority, and subsequently heavy Ukrainian losses, on the battlefield," Basham said.

Any serious risk of escalation between the United States and Russia would only occur should certain US officials who seek regime change in Russia dominate the decision-making inside the Biden administration, Basham said.

The Ukrainian Embassy in Washington told The Associated Press in early March that of approximately 6,000 Americans who signed up to fight in Ukraine, about half were rejected before even interviewing with Ukrainian officials. Moreover, the Ukrainian Embassy said that of the 3,000 Americans who went through the recruitment process, as of early March, only about 100 had actually been accepted.

Rutgers University law professor Roger Clark, who previously worked for New Zealand's Justice Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the UN Committee on Crime Prevention and Control, told Sputnik it is not illegal for American volunteers to fight in Ukraine.

"[T]he Neutrality Act is not a problem," Clark said. "It is clear on its face, and this is supported by case-law, that ANYBODY enlisting within the US commits a crime. But it is safe, under this Act, for US citizens and residents to enlist outside the US. So long, that is, the force they join is not at war with the US."

Clark said Biden is pretty determined not to place US troops on the ground in Ukraine, so federal efforts to vet potential US volunteers going to Ukraine could be a way to show it takes the Neutrality Act seriously, and to possibly fish for any potential breaches of the law.

The US government would probably only take action against Americans fighting in Ukraine if they were to commit war crimes, Clark said.

Texas A&M University International Affairs Professor Ronald Sievert, who had a career on international and national security matters at the US Justice Department, told Sputnik the Neutrality Act was designed to stop Americans from taking sides in the fight between France and the United Kingdom in 1795.

"Some people just want to fight Russia and sympathize with Ukraine," Sievert said. "Regardless, [US President George] Washington's proclamation of neutrality was not a law - President's do not make laws."

Sievert pointed out that American volunteers known as the Lincoln Battalion fought for communists against fascist Spain during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s.

NEGOTIATED PEACE SETTLEMENT IN UKRAINE NEEDED AT EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY

The State Department has repeatedly ruled out engaging with Moscow anytime soon with respect to the Ukraine conflict. US Congress recently passed a \$40 billion relief package for Ukraine, over half of which consists of military aid, raising concerns about the conflict escalating.

"A negotiated peace settlement at the earliest opportunity is required to resolve this conflict,"

Basham said. "With each passing day, more Ukrainians are killed and injured and more territory is ceded to Russia. So, the longer the West waits to iron out a deal with Russia, the greater the toll upon Ukraine and the stronger the Russian bargaining position will be."

If the trajectory of the Ukraine conflict continues apace, before too long there will be no incentive for Russia to negotiate at all, because Moscow will soon have the upper hand, Basham said.

Basham said Volodymyr Zelenskyy is certainly aware that the war is lost and new Western assistance may do no more than prolong Ukraine's now-inevitable defeat. Moreover, the problem for Zelenskyy is that his government is no longer calling the diplomatic shots.

"It is the American and British governments that are resisting a diplomatic solution," Basham said. "Instead, they are doubling-down on tactics and rhetoric that, with each passing day, are further detached from the realities on the ground in Ukraine. For this conflict to be resolved, it is Washington and London, rather than Kiev, that needs to read, and act upon, the writing on the wall."

Biden said in an op-ed published on the New York Times on May 31 that the United States will not pressure the Ukrainian government in public or in private to make any territorial concessions to Russia,

Russia launched a special military operation in Ukraine on February 24 in response to calls by the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics for protection from Ukrainian troops. The Russian Defense Ministry said the goal of the operation, which targets Ukrainian military infrastructure, is to "demilitarize and denazify" Ukraine, and to completely liberate Donbas.

Russian President Putin has said the operation aims to "protect people subjected to genocide by the Kiev regime for eight years." As of March 25, the Russian Armed Forces completed the main tasks of the first stage, significantly reducing the combat potential of Ukraine. Western nations have imposed numerous sanctions on Moscow.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Senator Urges Biden to Push Interpol on Arresting Venezuela's President Maduro - Letter

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - US Senator Marco Rubio on Monday urged the US government to push Interpol to put out a request for the arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.

"I write to request that you direct the US National Central Bureau to immediately submit a request to Interpol's Secretary General to publish a red notice for the provisional arrest of Nicolas Maduro," Rubio said in a letter to US Attorney General Merrick Garland and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

Rubio said Maduro must face trial for allegedly engaging with terrorist organizations to use illegal drugs as weapons against the United States.

The senator from Florida claims Maduro's arrest would serve the US national security interests and will be a positive development for regional stability.

However, unidentified officials have said the Biden administration may lift US sanctions against Venezuela to import oil in order to halt the soaring fuel prices. President Joe Biden sent a delegation to Venezuela in March to negotiate with the Maduro government on the issue of oil supplies.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

UN 'Extremely Alarmed' About Fighting, Civilian Casualties in Severodonetsk - Spokesperson

UNITED NATIONS, June 13 (Sputnik) - The United Nations is very concerned about fighting in and around Severodonetsk having received reports earlier about civilian casualties in the area, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Monday.

"We and our humanitarian partners are extremely alarmed over reports of intense fighting in Severodonetsk and surrounding areas, which is severely impacting men women, and children who remain in the area," Dujarric said during a press briefing. "Daily shelling and bombardments have led to civilian casualties, areas very close to United Nations facilities have been affected by the fighting."

Earlier on Monday, Russia advanced its special military operation in Severodonetsk and pushed Ukrainian forces back from the center of the city.

The mission of the Donetsk People's Republic to the Joint Center for Control and Coordination reported that Ukrainian troops again shelled the city of Donetsk early in the morning.

Dujarric said a market and an apartment building were hit in Donetsk when shells - fired by Ukrainian troops - landed in populated areas in the center of the city, some 50 meters away from the United Nations compound there.

The UN spokesperson said insecurity and bureaucratic obstacles have prevented the United Nations from providing life saving assistance amid the fresh fighting in developing Severodonetsk and the surrounding areas.

"The last time we sent a convoy with supplies to Severodonetsk was on April 5 carrying supplies to more than 17,000 people," he said.

Dujarric noted that the United Nations along with its humanitarian partners on the ground has engaged on several occasions with the parties to the conflict to facilitate access to people in need of aid but without success.

"We again stress that all parties to the conflict must respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians," he said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trump Advisers Held Mixed Opinions About 2020 Election Fraud Claims - US House Panel

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - Associates of former US President Donald Trump held mixed opinions about the decision to declare victory and advance allegations of fraud on election night in November 2020, according to interviews released by the US House Select Committee on the January 6 events during the panel's second public hearing on Monday.

The second hearing by the Select Committee focused on events surrounding the 2020 US presidential election, Trump's conversations and actions on election night, and the emergence and furtherance of election fraud claims.

Trump associates, including 2020 campaign manager Bill Stepien, former Attorney General Bill Barr and personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, expressed conflicting opinions on the issue of claiming victory and furthering various allegations of election fraud in a meeting at the White House on election night.

"There were suggestions by, I believe it was Mayor Giuliani, to go and declare victory and say that we'd won it outright," senior Trump campaign advisor Jason Miller said in an interview with the Select Committee. "To the best of my memory, I was saying that we should not go and declare victory until we had a better sense of the numbers."

Stepien said it was "far too early" to make any calls on the election that night in response to a question about his feelings on the issue during the meeting.

Trump's daughter, Ivanka, said she did not hold a "firm view" about the matter in response to a question about her opinion of what Trump should have said on election night.

Following the election night and subsequent allegations of election fraud, Barr told Trump that he believed the claims were without merit, in response to which the former president became "indignant," according to an interview with Barr.

The claims of election fraud were pushed by Trump and Giuliani and made before any evidence could be found, Barr said during the interview.

Senior Trump advisor Jared Kushner shared his view with the former president that he should not follow Giuliani's advice to advance claims of election fraud, according to an interview.

The Select Committee heard testimony from witnesses throughout the hearing about the origins and veracity of claims of election fraud by Trump and others, including those involving Dominion voting machine systems and ballot "mules."

Cheney said the panel's investigation is still ongoing, so the initial findings that will be made public during the upcoming hearings will not be the complete set of information that will ultimately be disclosed.

Trump and numerous other critics have argued that the work of the US House Select Committee is a show trial intended to score political points before upcoming elections, given that the FBI already investigated the matter and concluded there was no insurrection.

Regarding the issue of election fraud, critics have most recently pointed to the new documentary "2000 Mules," which presents evidence of some of the more than 4 million minutes of government video footage showing how "mules" stuff ballot boxes throughout the United States.

Critics have also said the probe is biased because US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi refused to admit Republican lawmakers on the panel who may question and challenge its work.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Newspaper Publishes First Declassified Pictures of Guantanamo Bay Detainees - Reports

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The first declassified photographs of Guantanamo Bay detainees from Afghanistan, who arrived at the infamous US detention center in Cuba only months after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the United States, were published by the New York Times on Monday.

The newspaper said it managed to obtain the photographs, released by the Defense Department earlier this year, by issuing a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

The photographs were originally taken by military photographers to show senior US officials an inside view of the detention center as well as of the interrogation procedures shortly after the facility was opened, the report said.

The first 20 detainees began arriving to the detention center on January 11, 2002. From the beginning, the US military had established a strict control over which photographs could be released and published, the report said.

Judging by the published photographs, the detainees were brought to Guantanamo Bay in orange suits, blindfolded with non-transparent goggles, handcuffed, with their legs shackled and with muffs put on their ears, the report said.

All detainees arriving at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility were supposed to wear a medical mask due to concerns that some prisoners might have tuberculosis, the report said.

Two military guards were assigned to each of the first 20 detainees, who were thoroughly searched and transported via a modified school bus, the report said.

One of the pictures shows the prisoners' food ration, which included rice, beans, carrots, fresh fruit and bread and even Islamic "halal" rations later on, the report added.

To date, 37 detainees remain at the detention center, 18 of which have been recognized eligible for transfer, seven are awaiting a Periodic Review Board, while ten are involved in military commission proceedings and two are being sentenced, according to the Defense Department.

The Guantanamo Bay detention facility was established after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States. Representatives of various national and international organizations, including the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, have appealed to the Biden administration to speed up the closure of the detention facility amid continuing reports of gross mistreatment and human rights violations.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

US Sanctions on Russian Diamonds Mainly Impacting Supply to India - Antwerp Diamond Center

WASHINGTON, June 13 (Sputnik) - The US sanctions imposed on Russian rough diamonds are mostly having a serious impact on India's supply chain, Antwerp World Diamond Centre head of media relations Tom Neys told Sputnik.

In early April, the Biden administration imposed sanctions on Russian diamond mining company Alrosa, which is responsible for 90% of Russia's diamond mining capacity and is the source of about a third of all diamonds worldwide. Prior to the designation on Alrosa, President Joe Biden issued an executive order to ban US imports of non-industrial diamonds from Russia.

"The problem is mainly in India today," Neys said. "The supply chain to India is seriously disrupted and the payment issues are still not fully resolved. Also, handling to Dubai goes problematic."

The disruption to India's supply chain has a huge impact on employment in the country, working weeks in the polish factories are getting shortened because of the supply shortage, Neys said. In late May, the president of India's Diamond Workers Union Gujarat, Ramesh Zilariya, told Sputnik that Western sanctions on rough diamonds have ended up devastating workers in India's polishing industry, where unemployment, wage reductions, and suicide rates are now on the rise.

The Antwerp World Diamond Centre, which is the world's largest hub for rough and polished diamonds, still sees diamonds coming from Russia, but with big delays due to double and triple checking if all stages in transport and handling are fully compliant with the current sanctions, Neys said.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Trudeau Says Tested Positive for COVID-19

OTTAWA, June 13 (Sputnik) – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Monday he has tested positive for COVID-19.

"I've tested positive for COVID-19. I'll be following public health guidelines and isolating. I feel okay, but that's because I got my shots. So, if you haven't, get vaccinated – and if you can, get boosted. Let's protect our healthcare system, each other, and ourselves," Trudeau said.

This is the second time the prime minister has tested positive for coronavirus, first being in January.

Trudeau's positive result happens after he personally attended the Summit of the Americas last week, where he held a meeting with President Joe Biden on Thursday.

This material is distributed by Ghebi LLC on behalf of Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency, and additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, District of Columbia.

Bitcoin Hits December 2020 Low Ahead of Anticipated US Interest Rate Hike

NEW YORK, June 13 (Sputnik) - The price of Bitcoin fell on Monday to its lowest level since December 2020 on widespread risk aversion across US markets by investors who fear runaway inflation might make the Federal Reserve more aggressive with a new round of interest rate hikes beginning this week.

By 11:15 a.m. ET (15:15 GMT), Bitcoin was at \$22,843, down \$4,980 or 18% on the day. The leading cryptocurrency fell to a session low of \$22,594 earlier, its lowest since December 16, 2020, when it plumbed an intraday bottom of \$21,322.

The Federal Reserve is widely expected to raise interest rates for a third time this year at the conclusion of the June policy meeting of its Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) on Wednesday.

After leaving rates at between zero and 0.25% for a period of two years due to the coronavirus outbreak, the FOMC raised them by 25 basis points, or a quarter-percentage point, in March and 50 basis points, or a half-percentage point, in May. While its June meeting was initially expected to result in another half-point rise, some economists are speculating that the central bank is toying with a 75 basis point, or three-quarter percentage point, hike due to runaway inflation.

On Friday, the US Labor Department reported that the Consumer Price Index grew by 8.6% in the year to May, expanding by the fastest rate since 1981, as the cost of virtually everything - from food to fuel, shelter and clothing - spiked last month. The average price of gasoline at the pump, particularly, hit more than \$5 a gallon for the first time ever in the United States last week. The University of Michigan said its closely-followed US Consumer Sentiment Index hit a record low in its latest survey for June as Americans become increasingly disillusioned with inflation taking a bigger bite of their paychecks each month. Consumer spending accounts for 70% of the US economy.

The Federal Reserve's tolerance for inflation is 2% per year and the US central bank has vowed to raise interest rates throughout the year and even slow the economy, if necessary, to reduce inflation.

Aside from Bitcoin's plunge on Monday, US stocks also tumbled with Wall Street's S&P 500 and Nasdaq Composite indices losing more than 20% on the year to enter the so-called bear-market territory.